



*by Madam Ru*

# **It's Not Easy to be a Man After Travelling to the Future**



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# **It's Not Easy to Be a Man After Travelling to the Future**

**– Crossing to the Future, it's Not Easy to Be a Man –**

**- Part 3 -**

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**[ ryuxenji (Qidian International) ]**

# Chapter 201

## Acceptance Letter!

Ling Lan did not hold back that heavy breath in her chest. She let it out slowly, finally settling the discomfort she felt. Although Ling Lan had successfully withstood one spiritual blow from Ling Xiao, she only became more convinced of Ling Xiao's unfathomable power. This was because Ling Xiao's spiritual charge had been so effortless on his part, so casual that it was frightening to consider.

This was the second time Ling Lan had felt like this after encountering Instructor Number One. It was as if she would not be able to catch up even if she worked hard her entire life. If Ling Lan had not been through all kinds of perverse torments under Instructor Number Five, causing her mentality to be extremely secure, this clash might have caused a flaw to appear in her mental state.

From the sidelines, Mu Shui-qing chuckled and said, "Ling Xiao, what do you think? Ling Lan's heptashield is very impressive, right?" Mu Shui-qing's tone was undoubtedly smug. Inheritance was all well and good, but innovation would undeniably make a master even more excited and pleased. The ultimate goal of a legacy was for a pupil to surpass their master <sup>1</sup>, after all.

Even the consistently prodigious Ling Xiao was amazed by Ling Lan's innovative breakthrough. The smile on his face grew even more radiant as he nodded repeatedly and said, "Yes, it's too unexpected. I never knew the heptashield could be used this way." He looked at Ling Lan with pride, "This should be the results of your own research, right? What a great idea."

The heptashield had always been categorised as a defensive ability, with basically no offensive capability. Only in the later stages, once one became extremely proficient in its use and had the power to back it, could one use the heptashield's mobility to deal some small attacks to an opponent. However, in comparison to Ling Lan's improved reflective shield, the offensive power of that was insignificant.

Ling Xiao's praise made Ling Lan somewhat shy. After all, this successful outcome was the result of the combined research of Little Four, the instructors, and herself. Ling Lan now knew that Little Four's so-called calculations and planning were actually all

the work of the instructors. The instructors had just not wanted her to know that they could learn from the techniques of the real world and study them and modify them, and so had made Little Four take credit for them.

Ling Lan rubbed her nose, and then began to explain the thought process behind the instructors' and her modifications to the technique. "Because I didn't want to passively wait for an opportunity, so I thought, if I could attack even as I was defending, wouldn't that change the flow of the battle? I was just thinking how I could make a shield have offensive capability...

"I tried many things, having also tried to use the shield as a weapon to attack the opponent. I found that it was all useless, because once the attack failed, it would switch into spiritual charge form. The shield would break apart on its own." Speaking of her past failures, a small smile appeared on Ling Lan's lips. During that period of time, the instructors had all had troubled expressions — even Instructor Number Five had not been able to maintain his typical perverse smile, becoming somewhat frenzied by their consistent failures.

"Later on, after happening to see the movement of a trampoline, I wondered if I could make the shield become like a trampoline. As it defended, could it also make the force it received bounce back? After studying it for quite a while, I finally managed to come up with this type of shield. As for why the surface is like a mirror..." Ling Lan trailed off here, a mischievous smile faintly appearing on her lips.

Ling Lan did not clarify, instead bringing out her heptashield once more. She positioned the three shields right in front of Ling Xiao, and then quickly changed all of them into the palm-sized mirror-surfaced small shields...

"Can all of them reflect?" asked Ling Xiao, irrepressibly curious.

"Attack and see," said Ling Lan, "Try to use as little strength as possible." The current defensive shield was not as strong as the original version of the heptashield; if Ling Xiao used too much power, he might not be able to see the effect.

Ling Xiao nodded and casually unleashed a spiritual charge. The force and pressure of this spiritual charge were not as strong as that of his previous one. The spiritual power broke through the first shield, and then broke through the second... but again met obstruction on the third shield, and the remaining power was reflected.

"The defence power of the mirrored surface is greatly weakened, and not every surface has the ability to reflect. Looks like the reflective ability is not because of the mirrored surface..." With this one strike, Ling Xiao had found the strengths and weaknesses of the shields. He understood that the appearance of the shields was not the most important thing — all of it was a show that Ling Lan wanted others to see.

The three mirrored shields destroyed, Ling Lan merely condensed three new shields before her. This time, the three shields did not change at all, looking exactly the same as Ling Xiao's heptashield.

At this point, Ling Xiao did not need Ling Lan to prompt him. He immediately sent a spiritual charge at the shields. The attack once again broke through the first and second shields, but was obstructed at the third shield, where the force was reflected back once more.

"This time, the reflective shield looks exactly like a normal heptashield. That means that the reflective ability is not due to external factors but an internal quality... but, why is it always the third shield which reflects? Are you free to choose which shield has the reflective ability, or is it restricted to the final shield? Or can all three shields have the power to reflect?" Gaining new information, Ling Xiao just had even more questions.

"I can only control one reflective shield at present, because the spiritual composition of the reflective shield is different from the original heptashield. As for which shield is reflective, that is up to me to choose," answered Ling Lan, "The reason why I place it on the third shield is because your power is too strong. Without the two shields before it to whittle away some of the power, I am not confident the reflection would succeed. Father, you should know that the reflective ability of the modified shield has its limits. If an attack exceeds that limit, the shield will just break and fail to have any reflective effect."

Listening to Ling Lan's explanation, Ling Xiao could not help but nod along. When he heard his daughter say his power was strong, he couldn't help but preen internally. Could this be considered his daughter's roundabout way of acknowledging him as her father? Ling Xiao was being overly optimistic about this. Ling Lan was just stating the facts, without any other thought in mind.

"Also, the defensive ability of a reflective shield is lower than that of a normal heptashield. Till now, I have not found a way to solve that issue." A trace of regret

appeared on Ling Lan's face. If she could make the defensive power of the reflective shield equal to that of the original heptashield, only then would her innovation be considered successful. Right now, it was still an unfinished product.

"Ling Lan, you are still young! You still have so much time to perfect this technique," said Ling Xiao, "The creation of a new technique must go through countless experimentations and revisions. Don't be impatient."

This advice startled Ling Lan — that's true, when did she become so impatient? Instructor Number One had plainly told them before that developing a new technique required the test of true combat. In the process, countless adjustments and revisions were doubtlessly necessary. What remained in the end would definitely be the result of countless reforging.

"Thank you, father!" Even if she was unable to call Ling Xiao 'daddy' so intimately right now, Ling Lan would not be stingy with the address of 'father'.

Emotion flashed through Ling Xiao's eyes. This was a good sign! His daughter's tone seemed to be softer than it had been previously — did this mean that his daughter had already accepted him?

Ling Xiao decided to strike while the iron is hot, and take the chance to interact well with Ling Lan now, so he began asking more about the spiritual construction of her reflective shield. Ling Lan had never thought to hide this information, so when Ling Xiao asked, she began describing all her findings to him.

Mu Shui-qing looked at the father and daughter pair before him discussing the command of spiritual power, and the heart-warming scene made his eyes feel a little damp. In the past three years, he had fantasized before how wonderful it would be if Ling Xiao still lived! Who would have thought that three years later, his fantasies would become reality... the heavens were truly kind to this old man for letting him see this scene...



Time passed swiftly; a month's time over in the blink of an eye. Sometime during the month, the acceptance letter from the First Men's Military Academy arrived as expected.

However, on the day the letter was collected, another case of domestic violence occurred in the Ling family. Seeing the acceptance letter rekindled Lan Luofeng's dormant grudge with a new dose of anger. She instantly gave Ling Xiao a kick, not forgetting to add on an elbow attack as well... As Ling Xiao was afraid that he would harm Lan Luofeng accidentally, he did not dare to use Qi to protect himself. So, Lan Luofeng's attacks landed squarely on Ling Xiao's body, causing him to grimace in pain.

Not just that, that night, Lan Luofeng staunchly refused to let Ling Xiao into her bedroom. However, early the next day, Ling Lan was lucky enough to see Ling Xiao being kicked out of Lan Luofeng's bedroom, so she knew that Ling Xiao had still managed to sneak into Lan Luofeng's bedroom successfully last night!

In contrast to Lan Luofeng's anger, the main victim in question, Ling Lan, seemed not at all concerned. Since Ling Xiao had said that he would be able to help her handle all those tests and training that could expose her gender, what else was there for her to worry about? Besides, she was actually quite curious about the First Men's Military Academy.

Meanwhile, in this one month, Ling Lan had often sparred with her father Ling Xiao. Of course, this was just a nice way of putting it — in fact, she had been one-sidedly bullied by Ling Xiao via all manner of torments. When it came to combat, Ling Xiao showed no mercy. This made Ling Lan miss Qi Long and her band of companions terribly — because when she fought with them, she would be the one playing Ling Xiao's role.

However, Ling Lan's fate of being tormented ended after a month. This was because Ling Xiao had finally succumbed to military headquarters' consecutive desperate summons, finally being summoned out of the Ling family mansion back to military headquarters. A week later, the military would hold a large press conference for him, where they would announce the official commencement of the formation of the 23rd Division. Just like that, Ling Xiao transformed from an extremely free house husband and male nanny extraordinaire into the busiest great general in the Federation.

Accompanying Ling Xiao to military headquarters was the still fuming Lan Luofeng. Of course, Lan Luofeng had not intended to go with Ling Xiao at first, but she had been bundled up and sent on her way with Ling Xiao by Ling Lan. Mind you, in one more month, she too would be setting off for the First Men's Military Academy to register. Was Lan Luofeng supposed to be left all on her own then at the mansion to guard an empty nest?



Furthermore, Ling Xiao was now the most eye-catching superstar general of the military, neither lacking in looks nor reputation. The number of people who liked Ling Xiao must be staggering — if Lan Luofeng continued to sulk and make things difficult for Ling Xiao, what if another woman found some opportunity to wedge her way in? Wouldn't Lan Luofeng regret that to death?

Ling Lan clearly knew that Lan Luofeng was the type that was unyielding on the outside but soft on the inside <sup>2</sup> — if not, during this one month, her dad would not have constantly been kicked out of her mum's bedroom in the morning... Ling Lan did not have to wonder to know what they had been doing during the night.

However, a few times, Ling Lan had seen Ling Xiao rubbing his knees inexplicably. This made Ling Lan suspect her great father had been punished by her great mother to kneel on a mecha circuit motherboard...

Ling Lan had seen that thing before — it had lots of parts sticking out vertically on it, all of them very solid and very pointy. At this thought, Ling Lan could almost feel her knees aching in sympathy. She could not help pitying Ling Xiao — her great mother was actually quite the black-bellied character.



# Chapter 202

## Preparing for Departure!

A week after Ling Lan sent her parents off, the military called a press conference, announcing the news of Ling Xiao's return to life to the public!

Ling Lan looked at the unbelievably handsome and elegant Ling Xiao on the screen and could not help but be in awe. Her father in this life was truly impeccable whether it was in terms of appearance or air of presence. However, she of course admired Ling Xiao's loyalty and steadfastness in love and marriage much more. Whether it was in her past life or this one, a good man, in Ling Lan's opinion, was someone responsible like Ling Xiao.

*"Daddy, can I really believe that you will come back?"* Ling Lan thought back to the young Ling Xiao in the legacy space — after 17 years, Ling Xiao seemed to still be the same Ling Xiao...

"Don't disappoint me, Daddy! You must give Mummy happiness!" Seeing the mature and gentle Ling Xiao, who seemed as if he could accept anything, Ling Lan could not help but press a hand to her own chest, muttering to herself with a complicated expression.

As long as... as long as I can confirm that you are the same man as before, I will definitely willingly call you 'daddy'! All of Ling Lan's feelings for her father had been given to the Ling Xiao from the legacy space who had watched her as she grew up. This was also the final reason why Ling Lan was still unwilling to call Ling Xiao 'daddy'.

Ling Xiao's return not only invigorated the entire Federation, but also stunned the countries bordering the Federation, their attitudes towards the Federation beginning to change. Before Ling Xiao's return, although the Federation still had eleven god-class operators, five of them were already officially in their old age, their condition deteriorating significantly. Three of the five were even already at the phase when they were just waiting for heaven to call <sup>1</sup> — whether they could maintain even half of their combat ability was a question mark.

The Federation only retained 5 to 6 god-class operators who were in fighting form.

Compared to the other countries, they did not have that many more god-class operators in their peak. This was also why the Federation had not had a lull in battle for these 10 over years, because it no longer possessed enough combat power to deter its border countries.

But Ling Xiao's return to the Federation made the Federation's combat power increase tremendously, because Ling Xiao was young enough that his future was immeasurable. He might very well become the strongest god-class operator in legend. Not just that, Ling Xiao also was sitting on a method to ascend to god-class operator, which could let the Federation cultivate even younger god-class operators. Of course, god-class operators were not that easy to cultivate, perhaps requiring ten to twenty years or even longer. That said, many high-level operators would probably be produced in the process — there definitely wouldn't be few ace operators or whatnot. This was something the other nations really did not want to see.

This restored the Federation's deterrent power to its initial state before Ling Xiao's death. All the countries became extremely friendly, respectively sending delegations to congratulate the Federation. All the ambassadors' attitudes were obviously much more respectful than before. This made the Federation's government extremely happy — it should be known that in the 17 years after Ling Xiao's 'death', the Federation had lived in a very repressed manner. But now, they could finally have better days.

Ling Xiao's popularity and high status also caused the initially ignored and rather bleak Ling family to once again become busy and lively. Ling Lan was in no mood to entertain these materialistic fair-weather 'friends', so she summarily announced that she was isolating herself for training, the Ling family mansion officially closing its doors to all visitors.

During this time, Ling Lan had also received congratulatory letters from Qi Long and the others. They were all extremely happy on their boss's behalf, while also thrilled that the idol of their hearts was still alive. If they weren't currently part of an exploration team on an interplanetary adventure, they would definitely have rushed over to the Ling family home to visit Ling Lan, and taken the chance to understand the entire story at the same time.

Their correspondence made Ling Lan happy, but of course she did not forget to remind them to be careful outside. Originally, Ling Lan had also wanted to tell them that she would be joining them at the First Men's Military Academy this year, but she held back the words as they were about to spill from her mouth.

Ling Lan wanted to give them a surprise! Of course, Ling Lan would never admit that she actually wanted to see their expressions as their jaws dropped in surprise... She was such a great boss, how could she be so evil?



Another twenty days passed, and it was finally time to register at the First Men's Military Academy. Even though Lan Luofeng had contacted Ling Lan several days ago, saying that she and Ling Xiao wanted to rush back to accompany her to register, Ling Lan had strongly refused. This was because the assembly point listed on the acceptance letter was the intergalactic spaceport on Doha. In other words, she just needed to board the direct transfer to the spaceport. For such a short journey, it really wasn't necessary to drag the busy Ling Xiao back here.

Lan Luofeng initially refused to agree to Ling Lan's opinion, but Ling Xiao unexpectedly supported Ling Lan's decision. Back when Ling Xiao had agreed, Ling Lan could hear Lan Luofeng roaring angrily in the background — although Lan Luofeng had agreed with father and daughter in the end, Ling Xiao most probably had to pay a painful price for this. As for what that price was, Ling Lan could not know.

On the night before she left, after Ling Lan and Lan Luofeng had shared updates with one another as usual, Ling Xiao had unexpectedly appeared beside Lan Luofeng, requesting to speak with her.

On the screen, Ling Xiao was again dressed in his general's uniform, and the fatigue between his eyebrows was hard to miss. His gentle voice rang out, and Ling Lan's heart throbbed. "Lan-er, I have arranged everything. For the first year, other than the theory classes, you are not scheduled to take any physical training courses, and you have been exempted from all the tests and assessments. However, I can only solve the official courses on the academy's side. It's up to you to handle the private and informal combat training that often occurs among students... Take care with everything!"

"Understood, Father!" said Ling Lan gratefully. However, Ling Lan's voice sounded as calm as ever, and was just as cold to Ling Xiao's ear. He sighed. When would his daughter open her mouth and call him 'daddy'? Perhaps even act like a sweet little girl in front of him begging for attention...

A visualisation of Ling Lan acting cute appeared in Ling Xiao's mind. A coy and bashful expression appearing on that icy cold face... Ling Xiao abruptly found himself feeling

unwell. Fine, Ling Lan was the best just the way she was. Ling Xiao wept — was he destined not to have a daughter-like daughter in his life <sup>2</sup>? At this moment, the hatred in his heart began to rise... the ones who had created this horrible outcome were definitely those people who had trapped him — he would never stop going after them.

Ling Lan felt a flash of killing intent sweep over Ling Xiao's body, but he returned to normal in the blink of an eye. If she had not been so attuned to killing intent due to the learning space, she might have been fooled by how quickly Ling Xiao had concealed it. She was somewhat puzzled — what was it that had caused Ling Xiao to suddenly be filled with killing intent?

Composed again, Ling Xiao looked at the calm-faced youth on the screen. Knowing that his 17-year long absence had already forced Ling Lan to be self-sufficient and be responsible beyond her years, the remorse in his heart grew.

No, this would not do. He must take on the responsibilities of a father. He must let Ling Lan know that, from now on, there was someone who would weather storms for her. "Ling Lan, at the military academy, you do not have to worry about anything. Do whatever you want to do. Dad will support you no matter what!" Ling Xiao said assertively to Ling Lan.

Instantly, Ling Lan found herself speechless. Ling Xiao's words made her recall that widespread phrase in her previous world: My dad is Li Gang <sup>3</sup>!

A scene popped up in Ling Lan's mind — arrogantly, she led her group of arrogant underlings around (Qi Long's team members all made cameo appearances), and whenever she saw anyone who rubbed her the wrong way, she would set her underlings on them with an imperious wave of her arm... and if anyone dared to question her actions, she would throw down these words audaciously: *My dad is Ling Xiao! Sue me if you dare! You fool!*

Truly spoken with the arrogance of a second-generation military elite! Ling Lan instantly slapped this scenario out of her mind. It was really all too familiar — definitely like the setup for a minor villain in a novel, like she was a small boss for the main character to defeat in his quest to level up. If that was the case, then wouldn't Ling Xiao be the final ultimate boss? Godd\*mmmit, the more she thought about it, the more likely it seemed! Ling Lan could not help but shudder. Could it be that she had not travelled to a future world, but into a novel instead? She really did not want to become this type of 2nd-generation good-for-nothing who would obviously just be

cannon fodder!

"Got it!" The rational Ling Lan would naturally not do something so stupid. Right now, she not only had to be responsible for herself, she also had to be responsible for her dad. The two of them, father and daughter, could not become a pair of bosses for that mysterious main character to level up!

Although Ling Lan was thinking this way, her heart still felt a surge of warmth. Ling Xiao's behaviour let her know that this Ling Xiao before her had absolutely no three outlooks when it came to his child 4...



Early the next day, Ling Lan, who was preparing to leave, was once again struck speechless by the Ling Qin couple's overboard way of doing things. Looking at the countless luggage bags that dominated a great half of the grand hall, even the typically calm Ling Lan could not stop her stoic face from twitching. "What is all this?"

"These are all the things you would need, Young Master!" The insensitive Ling Nanyi did not sense Ling Lan's bewilderment. She tugged on Ling Lan's hand and began explaining everything packed in the bundles of luggage. There were two large bags of clothes, one bag of shoes, two large bags of food and snacks, three large bags of medicinal agents, and four large bags of miscellaneous items. And this was all after she had tried her best to cut down.

Ling Lan could not help but rub her forehead. She was just going to school, not moving house...

"I just need two sets of clothes, two pairs of shoes, one week's worth of undergarments, and just give me the medicinal agents which were specially brewed by us. Leave the rest." Ling Lan just did not have the strength to correct what the couple Ling Qin had done. She gave a straightforward list of the things she wanted to bring.

"But, how will that be enough..." Ling Nanyi was still worried, and even Ling Qin, who had been listening quietly at one side, could not help but frown in disagreement at Ling Lan's list.

Ling Lan said helplessly, "All the other things can be solved with money. Do I really

need to bring so much?"

Ling Nanyi was enlightened. She nodded repeatedly, saying, "Right, right, right, why didn't I think of that? You're still the smartest, Young Master." That said, she happily began looking for the things Ling Lan had wanted.

However, she had truly stuffed too much together — it really was rather difficult to find the things Ling Lan wanted in the pile of luggage. However, even as she struggled with the luggage, Ling Nanyi did not forget to remind Ling Qin, "Husband, you should contact Master, ask him to send more credits for Young Master to spend..."

Ling Qin felt what she said was right. So, he immediately took action — without any care for whether Ling Xiao was busy, he called Ling Xiao's communicator directly and conveyed this request to his master.

A few seconds later, on Ling Lan's communicator, two blindingly astronomical amounts of credits were successfully transferred into her account. Without having to ask, Ling Lan just knew that this was definitely the doing of Ling Xiao and Lan Luofeng. It looked like the couple were doing their best to push her onto the road of idle profligacy...

# Chapter 203

## Send Off?

Doha. As the centre of the Federation, its intergalactic spaceport was also the largest and most luxurious of all the planets in the Federation. The spaceport was built in the outer space of the planet; the room inside it about the size of a city on the planet. Meanwhile, the staff of the spaceport all lived in the spaceport city. Other than a difference in gravity, everything else felt no different from being on the planet itself.

Connecting the spaceport and the planet was a specialised rocket car, while the heart of the spaceport itself was a special platform for it. It would receive the specialised rocket cars from various cities from all over. It could be said that the liveliest and most hectic place in the entire spaceport with the most people was right here. Even during normal periods, it would serve several hundred thousand people every day.

Moreover, today was one of the busiest days of the spaceport, because today was the day when the military academies and the myriad other famous schools held their annual registration. For this reason, all students who needed to register today were rushing to the spaceport with their guardians, causing the entire spaceport to be raucous with the cacophony of human voices as they said their goodbyes.

As the central planet of the Federation, Doha's spaceport was massive, possessing several tens of thousands of navigation frames for interstellar ships to park on. The respective military academies and other renowned schools already had their exclusive ships parked at the various ports, ready to welcome their incoming students. They were only waiting for the students to come and present their acceptance letters to gain entry.

Of course, these spaceships were definitely not going to be at the three districts, X, Y, and Z. Those three districts were restricted for military affairs, only available for combat warships to park at. Regular spaceships were not permitted to enter.

Meanwhile, at this time, in one corner of the hall of the special platform, several youths were gathered. One of the youths was squatting on the floor, a large steamed bun in each hand, while a ham sausage dangled from his mouth as he chewed on it ravenously, as if there was no one else around him. His crassness made the youths who



passed by, as well as their guardians, frown reflexively.

"Xie Yi, can you maintain a little dignity?" Among those standing, a youth with looks like a maiden could not help but gripe at the squatting youth, frowning.

"Luo Lang, I'm hungry..." With great difficulty, Xie Yi found time between bites to say this. This group was precisely Qi Long's team which had agreed to meet up and register together.

"Didn't you eat breakfast before coming?" Luo Lang glared disapprovingly at Xie Yi. Hells, it was almost ten! When exactly had this fellow woken up?

Xie Yi lunged at one hand then the other, and with two large manic bites, the steamed buns in his hands vanished just like that. He did not even chew them much before swallowing them down — however, this manner of eating, which only prioritised speed and not quality, immediately taught Xie Yi a lesson. He, the handsome and brave, infinitely charming Xie Yi was actually choked by the buns...

Xie Yi pounded his chest desperately. At the side, Lin Zhong-qing saw that the situation did not look right; he hurriedly took out a bottle of water from his backpack, uncapped it, and passed it to Xie Yi.

The moment Xie Yi got his hands on the bottle, he threw his head back and began pouring the water into his mouth, finally catching his breath as the buns slid down. "Damn, that was too dangerous. I actually thought that I would choke to death just now!" That said, he continued to pat his chest weakly in remembered fear, silently thankful for his luck.

"Who asked you to eat so quickly? It's like you haven't eaten your whole life," said Luo Lang, glaring at Xie Yi with contempt.

Xie Yi mumbled lowly, "If I wasn't trying to answer your question, would I have eaten so quickly?"

"What question?" Luo Lang blinked blankly, and then thinking back, he realised what it was and said, "That question about not eating breakfast?" Did that really need an answer? Just by looking at Xie Yi's ravenous manner, one could tell that he hadn't eaten breakfast for sure.

"Hehe, isn't this all because I was too excited to sleep last night? So I overslept today,

and didn't have time to eat breakfast..." Xie Yi was not at all embarrassed, loudly announcing the reason why he had not eaten breakfast.

"What are you so excited for? Isn't it just going to the First Men's Military Academy?" Luo Lang rolled his eyes in exasperation, face filled with contempt.

They had even gone on an interplanetary adventure already — Luo Lang, who considered himself a mature man now, was already extremely calm over their entrance into the First Men's Military Academy. Honestly, Luo Lang was also very excited inside his heart, but he just wasn't as exaggerated about it as Xie Yi was. Of course, he would never admit to this.

Luo Lang's contempt caused Xie Yi to 'tsk' in response. "That's not why I'm excited..." He lifted his head to look towards Qi Long, his expression filled with emotion, "Isn't it all because last night, the team leader mentioned that Boss Lan will come today to send us off... I was really moved by that."

Ever since he had met Ling Lan two months ago at the assessment venue, he had been constantly seeking his answer. Finally, during the team's adventure, he felt that he had found his role. However, they had not had a chance to meet with Ling Lan, so he had also not been able to tell Ling Lan the answer he had found.

During their adventuring, although Qi Long and the others would often contact Ling Lan through virtual communication, during those times, Xie Yi had somehow felt like he was an outsider. Even though Ling Lan would nod at him in greeting as well through the screen, not ignoring him, he just had the feeling that, whenever Ling Lan appeared, he would be subconsciously pushed to the side by the companions by his side...

Even more depressing was that the few times he tried to tell Ling Lan his answer through the screen, the moment his eyes met Ling Lan's stony expression and that pair of cold piercing eyes that seemed as if they could see through his soul, he had become unable to speak.

With regards to this, Xie Yi had to admit that he had an indescribable sense of apprehension towards Ling Lan deep in his heart. This made him not dare to speak recklessly. However, today's meeting would be a great chance. He would not retreat anymore — he would definitely tell Ling Lan what his answer was.

Xie Yi's words caused Luo Lang's expression to become serious. As long as it was

related to Ling Lan, Luo Lang's attitude would always become serious. In his heart, Ling Lan was the only peer he trusted and would submit to, an inviolable boss.

Yes, he would not submit to the number two in name, Wu Jiong, or the one who had battled him constantly for third place (sometimes winning, sometimes losing), Li Yingjie, or even the nominated team leader of their team, Qi Long. But he would never not submit to Ling Lan, who had always been formidable, mysterious, and unfathomable since they were young.

This was a kind of unvoiced respect and admiration that had been built up since they were young. With the increment of age, this respect and admiration only grew deeper and deeper, until it finally reached a point where it was indissoluble. In other words, Luo Lang would only submit to one person in this life; he would only recognise one boss, and that would be Ling Lan.

"Xie Yi is right. When I received leader's message, I blanked out completely, almost believing I had heard wrong..." said Lin Zhong-qing wonderingly.

In Lin Zhong-qing's impression, the cold and dominant Boss Lan would never do such a heart-warming thing like sending them off. He was more likely to send a hologram which would throw down this cold statement: "Don't disgrace me when you are there!" And then all kinds of twisted charm-dominance-coolness-swag<sup>1</sup> would follow, and all that was left for them would be an incomparably lofty silhouette which would then slowly fade away...

Which was why when Lin Zhong-qing had heard the news, he had been dumbfounded. He did not even remember when he had hung up his communicator on Team Leader Qi Long, where he had then shuffled off to eat a tasteless dinner, and then blurrily drifted off to his bed to fall asleep miraculously. Only when he woke up the next day and bit his arm hard did he realise that he really had not misheard.

Right then, standing to one side, Qi Long could not resist speaking up as well, "You don't have to mention yourself, even I was stunned silly when I received Boss Lan's video-call. My first thought was that I must be dreaming, that the person on the other side was definitely not my boss..."

Han Jijyun could not bear to listen to this any longer; he said sternly, "Alright, well, the fact of the matter is, Boss Lan is indeed coming to send us off. Buck up, all of you. Don't let Boss be dissatisfied."

Three years ago, due to Qi Long's emotional imbalance, the unhappy Boss Lan had immediately thrown down an assignment, causing them to go through countless torments and suffer terribly <sup>2</sup>. Han Jijyun really did not want for a repeat of that with yet another three-year mission because Boss Lan was unhappy with their conditions... he would most definitely collapse if that happened.

Han Jijyun's words caused the other people to shudder involuntarily as well. Even the typically slouching and unmotivated Xie Yi changed his original demeanour, becoming spirited and enthusiastic. That mission three years ago had truly frightened the wits out of them. They dared not try something like that again easily.

Seeing his companions change gears into their dashing and energetic personas, Han Jijyun turned with satisfaction to look at the time on his wrist communicator. "It'll be 10 in another three minutes. Boss said to meet at the great hall of platform number 9 right around 10, so he should be here soon."

They all glanced reflexively at their own communicators. Seeing that Han Jijyun was right, they all came to attention and began waiting with their heads lifted high, peering greedily at the crowd coming to and fro on the hall of the platform, hoping to see their boss among them...

Behind them, in a row of seats by a wall, in a semi-reclined seat, a person who had seemed to be dozing with their face hidden behind a freshly-printed Federation magazine suddenly sat up straight.

This person was wearing an extremely simple white shirt, which was topped by a thin army-green windbreaker, black pants, held up by a gold-buckle belt, and on their feet was a pair of black army boots. This outfit should have been eye-catching, making its wearer appear handsome and spirited, but for some reason the wearer was extremely nondescript, just as if they were a regular pedestrian, causing others to overlook the other instinctively...

He slowly pulled off the magazine covering his face, revealing a cold and expressionless face. Looking intently at the group of youths trying to find their target, the corners of his lips curled up involuntarily, breaking the ice to allow a faint sense of warmth to appear on his body.

He stuffed the magazine in his hand into the backpack by his side, and then slung the backpack over his shoulder as he walked slowly towards the backs of Qi Long and the

others. As his footsteps made almost no sound, Qi Long and the rest did not realise at all that someone was now at their backs.

"Not right!" Suddenly sensing something, Qi Long abruptly turned his head around. At critical moments, Qi Long's innate talent Animal Instinct kicked in.

Qi Long's sudden movement startled the others, who then also turned reflexively. Luo Lang even moved into an attack stance at first notice.

"Boss!" exclaimed Qi Long, voice hoarse with shock, "How did you get behind us?"

Mind you, the place where they had been standing put the entire crowd entering and exiting the platform within their range of sight. There should be no way for someone to avoid their sight to appear directly behind them. Could it be that Boss had the miraculous ability of teleportation? Qi Long could not help but wonder irresponsibly.

# Chapter 204

## A Brass-Necked Diplomatic Personnel!

By the time Qi Long shouted, the others had also noticed that the one who had silently snuck up behind them was none other than Ling Lan whom they had been waiting for. They all became restless with excitement.

The small smile on Ling Lan's lips had disappeared without a trace at the moment Qi Long had turned around. Hearing Qi Long's question, Ling Lan huffed coldly and said with a stern expression, "I had been sitting behind you all this whole time. You all were just so careless that you forgot to check your backs. If I were an assassin, none of you would have escaped."

She had thought that after going on an interplanetary adventure, they would have become more vigilant — but they were unexpectedly still rather careless, actually neglecting a spot which they should never neglect.

Facing Ling Lan's stony visage, Qi Long and Luo Lang did not dare to put up any form of protest. They immediately bowed their heads and accepted the lecture, faces filled with embarrassment and remorse.

Only Han Jijyun tried to explain, "Boss, you intentionally suppressed your aura. Even if we had been more careful, we still wouldn't have been able to guard against you!"

Qi Long and Luo Lang nodded emphatically at Han Jijyun's words. In fact, when they had first arrived, they had carefully observed their surroundings as well as the few travellers seated on those seats behind them. Finding that their auras were all exceedingly normal, nothing at all out of the ordinary, only then had they let down their guard.

"Even if you don't sense any danger, you should not let down your guard completely," advised Ling Lan.

"Understood, Boss!" The five boys nodded respectfully. They knew that Ling Lan was only saying this for their sakes, otherwise he would not have personally set up this situation to teach them this lesson.

Ling Lan cast a satisfied glance over them and then said, "Since everyone's here, let's go to the registration point of the First Men's Military Academy." That said, she began to move, but she had only taken a few steps when Xie Yi spoke up from behind her, "Boss Lan, please wait a moment!"

Ling Lan turned with a quirked brow, "You have something to say?"

Xie Yi let out a deep breath, trying to ease his nerves, before saying, "Yes, I want to tell you, Boss Lan, the answer to that question you asked me three months ago."

Ling Lan folded her arms across her chest, lips tilted up slightly, tone interested as she said, "Oh?"

Ling Lan's gaze caused Xie Yi's heart to spasm, and the courage he had built up almost deflated. He clenched his fists tightly, silently cheering himself on. *Don't be nervous, you must spit it out. Whether you live or die all depends on today's attempt!*

He breathed in deeply once more and then said, "In the team, in terms of combat power, I am indeed no match for the leader or Luo Lang; in terms of strategy, I cannot compare against our strategist <sup>1</sup>; in terms of attention to detail, I cannot beat Lin Zhong-qing... but, I have a strength that no one else has. That is, my skin is thick enough, able to do things they might not be able to do..."

That statement of 'my skin is thick enough' caused the others to reveal expressions of shock. Was Xie Yi planning to use a 'sticky-candy <sup>2</sup> strategy' to cling to Boss Lan until he could not take it anymore and chose to acknowledge him? They surreptitiously wiped off the cold sweat pouring from their foreheads at the thought. Had they forgotten to tell Xie Yi that Boss Lan's tolerance was beyond horrifying? This move was doomed to fail!

"Three years since joining the team, I have gotten to know the personalities of my other teammates. The leader and Luo Lang are focused on combat, and have no patience to interact much with others. The strategist is intelligent and good at planning, but this gives pressure to others, who won't dare to approach the strategist easily, afraid they would be carelessly manipulated by the strategist..." Xie Yi listed out his teammates' strengths one by one, and his gaze finally fell on Lin Zhong-qing, "Lin Zhong-qing is good with people, and he's careful and observant — a lot of our intel was obtained by him from others, so this role would actually be really suitable for him as well. But, the support logistics for our team is a heavy duty, so he is also one of the



busiest in the team..."

Everything Xie Yi said was on point; Ling Lan nodded in acknowledgement of his logic. Seeing this, Xie Yi initially unsteady heart received a boost of encouragement, just as if he had been given a shot of heart tonic <sup>3</sup>.

With renewed courage, he raised his head abruptly, meeting Ling Lan's gaze head on, and said confidently, "So, I am prepared to take on the role of external communications. The team needs a diplomatic personnel to moderate when cooperating with other teams. With my thick skin, letting me go and communicate with the other party would undoubtedly be the most appropriate option. No matter what kind of attitude the other party has, I will be able to take it."

"It's unexpected that you would actually find such a role for yourself. Don't you think it's a waste of your talent?" said Ling Lan coldly, eyes trained on Xie Yi, her gaze almost boring a hole right through him, "Qi Long has told me before that you are a fighter no weaker than Luo Lang. Don't you want to be a main attacker of the team?"

Xie Yi chuckled dryly and said, "If there were only five of us in the team, without you, Boss Lan, around, perhaps I might be ambitious enough to try and fight for a primary attacker position, but..." He shook his head, "the leader and Luo Lang will definitely not relinquish the two main attacker positions. And besides, for you, Boss Lan, your right and left arms should be the leader and Luo Lang whom you are most familiar with and have the best rapport with. This will undoubtedly be more acceptable for you. I am well aware that three years is not enough time for me to challenge them for their positions."

At this point of his explanation, Xie Yi's gaze turned sharp. "Of course, in another three to five years, once I've become confident that my rapport with Boss Lan won't lose to the two of them, I will fight for a change of role."

Back when Xie Yi had been contemplating the issue, he had considered a formation without Ling Lan, with Qi Long as the leader. In that formation, he indeed had a high chance of becoming a main attacker, but Xie Yi believed that, with Ling Lan's capabilities, as long as the other's injuries were fully recovered, getting into the First Men's Military Academy was a sure thing. A year later, Ling Lan would definitely make a successful comeback and re-enrol into the First Men's Military Academy. Thus, he needed to consider the situation a year later.

Xie Yi's words touched Ling Lan. She had not expected that Xie Yi would include her in his considerations when coming up with his role in the team. If her father had not bungled up and caused her to be sent into the First Men's Military Academy, she would have really felt guilty for Xie Yi's struggles in coming up with this answer...

Ling Lan peered intently at Xie Yi and then said, "I understand!" That said, she turned around and left, being the first to walk out of the great hall of platform number 9.

Xie Yi stood stunned, unsure what Ling Lan meant by that reply. Right then, Luo Lang nudged Xie Yi excitedly, scolding him teasingly, "Idiot! This means Boss has acknowledged you."

Luo Lang's words caused Xie Yi to be overwhelmed with pleasant surprise. He really had Boss Lan's acknowledgement now? That's awesome! His suspended heart finally settled down after three months of worrying, and he actually felt his eyes grow damp. He couldn't believe he was on the verge of crying — this was really too embarrassing, really not what a grown man should be doing...

Qi Long trailed Ling Lan closely; as he passed by Xie Yi's side, he patted his shoulder heavily in congratulation. Three years' time was enough for them to consider Xie Yi like a brother, so they had sincerely hoped that he would be able to get Boss Lan's acknowledgement. Otherwise, it would have been a terrible shame even for them.

Following right behind Qi Long, Han Jiyun nodded at Xie Yi. Although his expression was just as austere as ever, his eyes could not hide his happiness and well wishes for Xie Yi.

When Lin Zhong-qing passed by Xie Yi's side, he laughed softly and said, "Xie Yi, congratulations." Lin Zhong-qing had also gone through Ling Lan's evaluation, so he really understood Xie Yi's feelings at this moment. That year, when he had earned his acknowledgement, he had been equally moved beyond composure — because this meant that he had truly become a member of the team, no longer at risk of being a passing guest...

Right at the end was Luo Lang. He smiled gently at Xie Yi, lovely as peach blossoms, his eyes glimmering with emotion, leading others to become mesmerized against their will. However, Luo Lang's following words instantly shattered this spell, "Idiot Xie Yi, why are you standing there stupidly? Not coming?"

Seeing Luo Lang's diminishing figure, Xie Yi chuckled dryly as he hurried to keep up.

Xie Yi could not help but sigh internally. Their entrance into the First Men's Military Academy definitely would not be calm and peaceful. Luo Lang was very likely to become their team's own Helen of Troy <sup>4</sup>... he could almost imagine it — in the military academy, him having to constantly run around handling all kinds of 'diplomatic incidents' caused by Luo Lang...

*"If Boss Lan is around, he should be able to hold back those deviant and insincere fellows, right?"* Thinking this way, Xie Yi began to fret over how he would live through that one year at the military academy without Ling Lan there to hold down the fort.

*"I hope I'm just worrying over nothing!"* Xie Yi could only think this way.

The six of them walked out of the platform. A cooling breeze swept by, and all of them felt refreshed. Although the spaceport was a fully enclosed man-made space, it simulated the natural environment on the planet, making people feel very comfortable.

The hover car stop was right outside the platform; they arrived at it after just a few steps. Meanwhile, by this time, Ling Lan's backpack had already migrated onto Qi Long's shoulders. As Ling Lan's capable follower, how could he allow Boss to personally carry his own backpack?

Freed from her luggage, Ling Lan stuck both her hands into her pockets, a carefree expression on her face. Since her follower wanted to please her, she should give him a chance to perform. Besides, she also knew that Qi Long's body, which was built like a bear, could even take on another 500 to 600 catties <sup>5</sup> without any trouble, which was why she could just kick back and enjoy this treatment.

The hover cars of the spaceport seemed to come one after another in a never-ending stream. The six of them swiftly managed to hail two hover cars and split up into two groups, and after keying in the district they needed to go to, the hover cars zoomed off towards their destination. The whole way there, all they could see were hover cars flying at different heights. They sped and weaved among one another at an unheard tempo, the scene much as if they had entered a rhythmic world of hover cars.

The First Men's Military Academy's registration point was at landing platform 99 of District-K. Once the hover cars of Ling Lan's group entered District-K, the horde of

hover cars in the sky was no longer visible, and the hover car closest to theirs had already moved to keep a kilometre away from them. It was clear to see that there were really very few people coming into District-K — this proved that the First Men's Military Academy was really not easy to get into.

The hover car very quickly arrived on landing platform 99, and Ling Lan and the others disembarked. Right in front of the landing platform was a gateway — to enter, one needed to have a gate pass, and this gate pass was an acceptance letter from the school.

Seeing this, the expressions of Qi Long and the others dimmed and they stopped walking. They knew that the time for them to part with Ling Lan was about to come; their initial excitement was now taken over by the sadness of parting.

"Why did you stop?" Seeing her five companions stop almost simultaneously, expressions dejected, Ling Lan was snickering in her heart, but her face only revealed a vague puzzlement.

"Boss..." Qi Long was the first to speak, but he did not know what else to say.

# Chapter 205

## I Used a Backdoor!

"What time is the deadline for registration?" Qi Long felt unsettled meeting the gaze of Ling Lan, who was eyeing him coldly, so he immediately turned his head to ask Han Jijyun. Fine, he really just could not look at Boss and say goodbye.

"Before 12!" Han Jijyun replied without even having to check. The typically careless Qi Long very easily forgot little details like these; this had made Han Jijyun develop the habit of being Qi Long's walking encyclopedia.

Qi Long glanced at the communicator on his wrist and saw that it was only 10:30. There was still time to hang out with Boss. At this moment, he was somewhat regretful — why hadn't he suggested they find a restful teahouse or café to have a nice chat before Boss had said to come here and register?

If the heart moved, then action should be taken immediately; Qi Long carefully tested the waters. "Boss, why don't we find somewhere to sit and have a chat? After all, it's still quite early before the deadline of 12 o'clock."

Ling Lan threw a cold glance at him, "What's there to chat about? Besides, no one knows what other procedures you will have to go through after going in. What if there isn't enough time?"

Qi Long found himself struck dumb by Ling Lan's words. Did he really have to come out and admit that he wasn't ready to say goodbye to Boss just yet? Qi Long, who considered himself a grown man now, felt it was beneath him to do such a childish action.

The others could see that Ling Lan's heart was set, not to be changed, so even if they were in full agreement with Qi Long's suggestion to spend a little more time with Boss, they did not dare to say anything in support.

Ling Lan watched as the five youths walked away, turning back to look at her with every step, faces filled with reluctance, and she almost lost hold of her coffin-face. She could not help but furrow her brow — it looked like she had not perfected her

slackface yet. She still wasn't at the point where she could be completely unfazed by anything and everything <sup>1</sup>. These cute expressions of her few little companions right now had almost cracked her icy facade... it looked like she still needed to train it more.

However, from Qi Long and the others' perspective, Ling Lan's locked eyebrows were an indicator that their boss was displeased with their maudlin display of dragging their feet. And so, they could only harden their hearts and force themselves to stop looking back. They each took out their respective acceptance letters and headed for the gateway's sensors and scanned them.

"Beep! Logging information, registered First Men's Military Academy cadet, Qi Long! Please provide your proof of identity!" Following the instructions of this mechanical voice, Qi Long held out his right wrist, allowing the scanner to scan his communicator.

"Beep! Proof of identity logged. Identity verified, entrance permitted!" The doors of the gateway suddenly slid open, revealing a tunnel about a metre wide. Qi Long walked through it and the gateway closed behind him once more.

Qi Long stood inside and waited for the others to enter as well. After all five of them had entered, they were just about to say their final goodbyes to Boss when they found to their shock that Boss Ling Lan had walked up to the side of the gateway.

Could it be that Boss still had some instructions to pass on? The five of them waited with bated breath, but the subsequent scene caused their jaws to drop, and they continued to gape for a long while.

Ling Lan took out a palm-sized card from her pocket and waved it at them. They could almost see a little devil peeping out from behind Ling Lan, smirking mischievously at them.

"Beep! Logging information, registered First Men's Military Academy cadet, Ling Lan! Please provide your proof of identity!" Exactly the same as when they went through the process, the gateway recited those familiar words.

They stared dumbly at Ling Lan as she calmly lifted her wrist communicator up for the sensor to scan, and then casually walked into the tunnel...

Qi Long rubbed his eyes forcefully to make sure he wasn't seeing things. Back when he had asked Ling Lan which school he had applied for, he had most definitely said it was the Windchase Mecha Service College on planet Aureolin, and he had also

confirmed that he had been accepted for enrolment. Then, why was Ling Lan all of a sudden a cadet of the First Men's Military Academy like them? What in the world was happening? Also, coming into the First Men's Military Academy just like this, will Boss's body be fine? Mind you, during the first year, all that the cadets would be learning would be some advanced and challenging physical training. Anyone with a weaker physical constitution was very unlikely to be able to bear it, not to mention someone like Boss with unhealed injuries.

In his shock, Qi Long could not help but voice his doubts.

Ling Lan held back her humour, and explained calmly, "This acceptance letter was obtained by my dad through a backdoor. As for the first year of physical conditioning, also because of this backdoor, my dad got me exempted..."

Han Jijyun was the first to regain his bearings. It made sense — as one of the nine great generals of the Federation, Ling Xiao definitely had enough clout to get his child into the First Men's Military Academy. As for the exemption... Han Jijyun could not recall anyone ever managing that.

Just as Han Jijyun was puzzling over the issue, a sudden spark of realisation flashed through his mind. He gasped in shock, "Boss Lan, do you already have a military rank?" Only students who were already military officers had the right to be exempted from exams for the first year, because their physical training and evaluations would be handled fully by the military.

Anyone who understood how the military divisions worked knew that the divisions' physical training and evaluations would only be tougher than the First Men's Military Academy's. Mind you, the physical training and evaluation of the First Men's Military Academy could only be labelled as a paramilitary training and evaluation. Just the prefix of 'para-' was enough to show that it was weaker than real military physical conditioning. Therefore, if someone could pass the military's physical training and evaluations, then they would definitely be able to pass the military academy's physical assessments.

"Hn, my dad has settled everything for me using that backdoor. I only need to focus on recovering from my injuries in the first year." The more Ling Lan elaborated, the more she felt like an entitled loafer. This made Ling Lan, who had always liked to let her strength do the talking, feel somewhat unsettled. It looked like one needed to have a strong heart to be an idle good-for-nothing rich kid, otherwise one just wouldn't have



the proper aura for it...

"General Ling is too amazing!" Qi Long and the others had all regained their senses by now. Hearing what Ling Lan had to say, they exclaimed in astonishment, gazes filled with the light of idolisation, admiration, etcetera. When it came to their dear cherished idol, they were completely blind to the fact that Ling Xiao's actions were already within the realm of abuse of power, an official misconduct.

"That's wonderful! Boss, we can be together again!" In his excitement, Qi Long glomped Ling Lan and would not let go, the initial morose uncertainty in his heart vanishing without a trace. Only now did he realise that, all these years, his Boss Lan<sup>2</sup> had already become the pillar of support in his heart. As long as Ling Lan was standing by his side, his heart would be filled with courage, confidence, and strength. Even if the path ahead was filled with countless trials and tribulations, he would be able to scream at the skies. Even if the skies of the Federation were to be ripped asunder, he would have no fear.

"Boss, you're so mean! Actually tricking us!" Luo Lang did not want to be left out. He also pounced over and hugged Ling Lan and Qi Long. Draping himself over the both of them, he snuggled forcefully into the nape of Ling Lan's neck in discontentment. He did not notice that when he said 'tricking us', his tone had lilted up at the end, the sounds drawn out, giving his words a sense of coquettishness.

Luo Lang's voice and actions made Ling Lan shudder and push him away. "Luo Lang, don't hang on me and act cute. You should remember you are a man! A man!" By the end, a growl could be heard in Ling Lan's voice; it was clear to see how deep her resentment ran on this matter.

D\*mmmit, why did her own voice have to be so cold, so flat? Sometimes, she had tried to intentionally curl her tone of voice at the end of her sentences, trying to warm up the atmosphere, but it only came out sounding even more threatening than before... Fine, she had now utterly given up on acting cute in this life. Her mum had not given birth to her with talent in this area; she could not force it!

Luo Lang flushed, his face becoming even more alluring with its pink glow. It was so pretty the others could not bear to look at him directly, all of them turning their heads away. Luo Lang said rather sadly, "Boss, when did I do that? Aren't I just being happy? Also, I'm a man to begin with. It's not like I wanted to look this way..."

His eyes were blurry with a light sheen of moisture, and there was a hint of a nasal tone to his voice due to his sadness, making his retort sound soft and weak. Anyone who heard it would instantly feel compassionate, reflexively wanting to speak up and comfort this cute and lovely sweetheart before them...

At this, even Ling Lan could not help but feel her face start to twitch. She pressed a hand to her forehead, trying to dispel her headache — for Luo Lang to enter the all-boys First Men's Military Academy looking like this... was this really a smart move? All kinds of BL stories she had read in her previous life surfaced in her mind... a boys' military school was fertile ground for cultivating homoerotic relationships!

*"Little Four, control yourself!"* Ling Lan's headache felt even worse. This Little Four — actually sneaking out at this moment to come and cause trouble for her... those BL stories that had appeared in her mind earlier had all been Little Four displaying the stories he had archived.

*"The fertile ground of homoerotic relationships!"* Little Four cheered in the mindspace. Of course, he secretly fantasized — would his boss go have a steamy gay fling at the military academy just once? Little Four started to feel excited, thinking that he had found a fun new game to play.

Right then, Ling Lan could not know what Little Four was thinking. She merely threw Little Four into the learning space, packing him up so he would not be able to come out and mess with her thoughts. Looking at the teary Luo Lang, Ling Lan thought of her own situation and could not help but sigh internally.

Forget it. She was already unintentionally on this road of cold and aloof dominance; having Luo Lang, who seemed to be developing unstopably in the direction of having a face as fair as a flower and as lovely as the moon <sup>3</sup>, by her side, was somehow a comfort to her. Perhaps this was a gift from the heavens — specially gifting her a little companion to share her androgynous fate. *This path was no longer as lonely as before!*

Ling Lan consoled herself. This way, she could now accept Luo Lang the way he was. And thus, Ling Lan put down the conflicted feelings she had in her heart. She walked over and patted Luo Lang on his shoulder, saying, "Then just stay like this! We only need to be ourselves!"

Ling Lan's words had a double meaning, but this could not be known by the other five. Only she herself knew that she was also consoling herself as she was consoling Luo

Lang.

Luo Lang's feminine appearance had always been a bitter pill in his heart. Originally, Luo Lang had thought that Boss Lan would be just like his other teammates, somewhat disapproving of his looks, but unexpectedly, Boss Lan had said such a thing to him instead. He was instantly greatly moved, abruptly gripped by a profound sense of being understood. "Boss, thank you!"

*Boss, only you understand my true heart. Luo Lang is still the same Luo Lang as before — I won't change just because my appearance has changed! Thank you, Boss. Having your trust, even if everyone else in the world looks down on me for my looks, I will not be angry or depressed, or ever doubt myself!*

Luo Lang's internal frustration with his looks disappeared. He smiled joyfully, radiantly, and even more beautifully. His initially still somewhat concealed radiance was fully unleashed at this moment, causing the others to feel as if they could not look at him directly...

But all the companions knew deep down that — Luo Lang had become stronger again! Because his charisma had risen to a whole new height! The companions who had grown up alongside him all knew very well that Luo Lang's capabilities and his charisma were correlated. The stronger he was, the brighter his charisma would shine!

Ling Lan did not know that her inadvertent consolation had let Luo Lang untie the knot in his heart. The release of the bindings caused his mental state to level up, increasing his initially secured physical skills plane once more, allowing Luo Lang's charisma to be improved and enhanced. This point would incite a great storm later on, causing their team to have a much harder time in the military academy with a never-ending string of conflicts!

And this storm would also lead a cadet with very hidden depths to stumble into Ling Lan's life...

# Chapter 206

## Journey!

The reality of Ling Lan's enrolment into the First Men's Military Academy thrilled Qi Long and the other four. Ling Lan waited for them to calm down, and then led them to enter platform 99.

The moment they entered platform 99, they saw a medium-small interstellar spaceship parked silently on the port runway. It went without saying that this was the spaceship which would be bringing them to the First Men's Military Academy.

The First Men's Military Academy was famous throughout the entire Federation. Everyone knew it was situated on planet Edusea <sup>1</sup>, but its specific address was not publicly known. This was very likely a measure to protect its students, but could also be to prevent riff-raff from getting close to the school and causing trouble. Whatever the reason, the obscurity of the academy's address was an undeniable fact.

The spaceship was quite a distance from them; a long and straight traveller <sup>2</sup> was directly connected to the entrance of the spaceship. The six of them stepped onto the traveller, and holding onto the handrail, they chatted leisurely as they were swiftly carried to the entrance of the spaceship.

They then walked off the traveller, and just as they neared the cabin door, an icy voice rang out, "Please display your boarding pass."

Inside the area right after the cabin door, a fully outfitted officer was standing. He politely saluted them and began going through the necessary pre-boarding check.

Ling Lan brought out that palm-sized acceptance letter from her pocket and passed it to the officer.

The officer reached out his right hand for it, and then lifted his left hand as well. There was a miniature device in the palm of his left hand — Ling Lan took a glance, and immediately realised that it was the Federation's latest data scanner model, which was also the most portable version.

Sure enough, the officer swiped Ling Lan's acceptance letter across the scanner, and Ling Lan's associated data instantly appeared on the device's screen.

When he saw the words 'DATA MATCHED' appear, only then did the soldier return the acceptance letter in his hand to Ling Lan. At the same time, the data on the scanner's screen quietly disappeared.

Somewhere internal where Ling Lan could not see, her name, which had been bright white on a registration name list, instantly turned black. Ling Lan's data had been transmitted instantaneously to the First Men's Military Academy's mainframe database to form a student file.

Of course, this was also another measure by the school to prevent outsiders from sneaking in. If by any chance someone managed to forge Ling Lan's acceptance letter and came to register, the registration list that already had Ling Lan's name dimmed would immediately cause the other to be withheld at the door. At the same time, the registered Ling Lan's data would be sent to the National Security Agency. The National Security Agency would then send an officer to investigate the two parties post haste to determine the truth of the matter before passing judgement.

The reason for this strictness was entirely because the First Men's Military Academy was the gathering grounds of the most exceptional young talents of the entire Federation. If an enemy spy managed to infiltrate the school and sabotage the students there, the Federation's combat capability would not only be greatly reduced for about 10 years, but could even result in a discontinuation of particular legacies. This was something the Federation could not abide; therefore, the registration period for new students every year was when the National Security Agency was most pressured.

After that, Qi Long and the others all passed through one after another, and then the six of them walked deeper inside the spaceship. Although it was considered a small ship, it was still rather large on the inside — larger than the large cruise ships of Ling Lan's previous world by 5 to 6 times.

They were led by a staff member of the spaceship to a large hall. In there were many seats, but they were not arranged like the seats of aeroplanes in her previous world, row by row. Six extremely comfortable armchairs were arranged around a round table, and this formation was repeated again and again to fill the entire hall.

Ling Lan estimated that, if all the seats were filled, it would amount to 700 to 800

people. However, right now, the hall was pretty empty, not many people in there at all. It looked like it was still rather early in the registration period, so many of the students were not here yet.

Ling Lan randomly chose one of the tables near the entrance of the hall and sat down, the others moving along with her.

As time passed, the spaceship started to fill with students. The initially quiet hall began to grow noisy and lively as people found others familiar to them and sat together, excitement written on every youthful face. Without question, each and every one of them was full of curiosity about their new life at the military academy.

Of these students, a large majority was undoubtedly from the Central Scout Academy. As they trickled in, some of them may not have noticed Ling Lan seated among them, but as the number of people increased, some sharp-eyed students finally noticed the presence of Ling Lan who should not have appeared here. Their first action then was to rush over excitedly and greet Ling Lan — the uncrowned king Ling Lan had their unquestioning deference.

As more and more students from the Central Scout Academy found out that Ling Lan was present, they all would run over by themselves to greet her. This caused the gazes of all the students from the other scout academies to turn pensive, starting to wonder who this person really was. Why did he have such high repute, to inspire these other elite talents to offer their greetings voluntarily?

They could see very clearly that these students had not a single bit of coercion in their demeanours; they were doing this sincerely. When they returned to their own seats, the smiles on their faces were obviously brighter than before, and their conversational manner became even more natural and at ease. It was as if just by greeting that youth, their confidence had increased.

This unusual reaction caused these students who did not know Ling Lan to become cautious of her. In combination with Ling Lan's originally cold demeanour, her expression icy and unapproachable... no matter how you looked at it, she did not seem like someone easy to get along with.

Wu Jiong's team and Li Yingjie's team entered at about the same time. Originally somewhat at odds with one another, the moment they stepped into the hall, they noticed Ling Lan seated among the other students. Their complexions shifted

minutely — Li Yingjie's face turned dark and he frowned slightly, while Wu Jiong donned an expression of pleasant surprise as he walked over and said in a raised voice, "Boss Lan!"

This cry was heard by almost everyone in the hall, and caused a change to come over the expressions of those people who were already wary of Ling Lan. The words 'Boss Lan' conveyed many things — strength, means, and also the ability to put pressure on them!

Any student who was accepted by the First Men's Military Academy was definitely the cream of the crop of all the scout academies from the various cities around Doha. In their world, they were like kings, each of them leaders of a sort. The words 'Boss Lan' raised their hackles instinctively, instantly turning Ling Lan into a public adversary.

Ling Lan quirked a brow and nodded, and then said calmly, "Wu Jiong, long time no see." This Wu Jiong had become really devious now! However, she had not intended to become a boss at the First Men's Military Academy anyway, so Ling Lan, who was determined to keep a low profile, did not really mind Wu Jiong's little manipulation. Rather, if Wu Jiong had not shown any ambition and desire to scheme, Ling Lan was more likely to have looked down on him.

"You have also come to the First Men's Military Academy?" Ling Lan's application to a school on planet Aureolin was known to almost everyone who paid attention to her. This question made all the other curious students who had been too afraid to ask perk up their ears, waiting for Ling Lan's reply.

Ling Lan said breezily, "I was lucky. The military recommended me." In front of outsiders, Ling Lan made sure to protect Ling Xiao's glorious image. Although at present these people did not know Ling Xiao was her father, Ling Lan believed that this fact would not be hidden for long. Mostly because Ling Xiao, who was eager for the whole world to know he was Ling Lan's father, would definitely find an opportunity to declare his identity in front of her fellow students...

Ling Xiao had a deep resentment over how Ling Lan had kept the fact that she was Ling Xiao's child a secret from her schoolmates for so long. Thus, Ling Lan knew that the seemingly mature and wise Ling Xiao would definitely act foolishly when it came to this matter!

Ling Lan's reply caused the hearts of Wu Jiong, Li Yingjie, and those in their company

to skip a beat — but it made sense once they stopped to think about it. They themselves had been witness to Ling Lan's strength. It was reasonable to believe that the military, which had always gathered data on the top talent from the various major scout academies, would not let such an unparalleled prodigy go to waste.

After exchanging a few more words, Wu Jiong led his team members away to sit at a position close to Ling Lan's table. On the other hand, Li Yingjie nodded stiffly at Ling Lan in greeting and then moved off to sit on another side. In contrast to Wu Jiong's sophisticated way of handling things, Li Yingjie was obviously much more inexperienced.

Very soon, it was 12. At this time, on the four walls of the hall, four huge virtual screens appeared. On the screens, a middle-aged man with a dishevelled face and a messily put on captain's uniform appeared.

The man snickered, and then said rudely, "You brats who are about to enter the First Men's Military Academy, I have to tell you, we are about to depart! This journey will take 2 days and 1 night. If you get hungry, on your right-hand side, is the cafeteria catering to you lot. Eat whatever you are given, no whining and backtalk! Also, on this journey, you all have to listen to me. You do what I tell you to do. Even if you are princes or geniuses outside, here, you are just the tiniest of all tiny little worms..."

The captain's arrogant words caused the expressions of everyone in the hall to change. Only Ling Lan's countenance remained unmoved; she merely continued to stare coldly at the bad-mannered, irritable spaceship's captain on the screen...

The captain seemed to notice Ling Lan's stare, for a mocking smile appeared on his lips. He swept a challenging look in her direction — though of course it could also be that he was just challenging everyone in the hall — and said, "What? You guys don't want to? That's fine. The crewmen under me just so happen to be so free they don't know what to do with themselves right now, and want to loosen their bones. I'll let them tell you lot what's the right choice to make in this situation!"

Accompanying the captain's words, a bevy of brutish and rowdy crewmen instantly surged out from passages at all corners of the hall to appear before the students. Their eyes were similarly filled with taunting challenge, as if eager to find any disagreeable brat so they could flex their muscles.

A portion of the students was petrified by this sudden situation. The faint signs of rage



on their faces slowly faded away as they made their way back to their own seats. It could be said that they were extremely rational, unwilling to become the chicken killed as a lesson to the monkeys <sup>3</sup>.

Qi Long, who was sitting beside Ling Lan, leaned close to Ling Lan and asked quietly, "Should I go teach them a lesson?" The other party's high-handedness rubbed Qi Long the wrong way. More importantly, this scamp's fists were starting to itch for a good fight.

Of course, Qi Long had also volunteered because he had confidence in himself. He had received focused instruction from Ling Lan since young, and he had also trained desperately to improve his skills in those three years when Ling Lan had not been around. Moreover, two months before this, he had also went on that high-risk interplanetary adventure. Having been through all this, he was no longer the unpolished fighter he had been before.

# Chapter 207

## Scheming!

Ling Lan shook her head and said, "No need. Wait and see!"

The spaceship's captain must have some reason for suddenly acting this way. A memory of the manga *Hunter x Hunter* she had read in her previous life surfaced in Ling Lan's mind. From the moment Gon Freecss <sup>1</sup> got on the boat to take the Hunter Examination, the testing had already begun.

"Is this a show of force to put us in our place? Or is it, like I suspect, our first test? How interesting!" A trace of humour appeared at the corner of Ling Lan's lips. This originally dull journey had suddenly become much more intriguing.

At this time, the crew members began to hurl jeers and taunts at the students, as if purposely trying to incite the students' anger and make them choose to fight. However, their efforts were all in vain, because the students all managed to restrain themselves in the end, not responding to their taunts.

Frankly, this was all because Ling Lan had chosen to wait and see. Seeing Ling Lan's party's inaction, the slick Wu Jiong was naturally unwilling to make a move recklessly. And while Li Yingjie may be immature and brash, he was not brainless, so he of course knew as well that this was not the time to act rashly. Meanwhile, ever since the grand armed melee, the rest of the Central Scout Academy students <sup>2</sup> had gotten used to following the lead of the three major teams. Since the three major teams were biding their time, the other students naturally followed suit to observe the situation.

And since a large half of the Central Scout Academy students had chosen not to do anything, the students from the other academies naturally would not be so retarded as to volunteer themselves as lab rats. After all, they were all elites from various academies — they were not so simple-minded that they would blow up from some taunting. Thus, this powder keg of a scene was resolved by the silent tolerance of one side.

Inside the captain's room, the captain could not hold back a curse, brusquely cutting off the video feed and auditory system on his end.

He turned to glare at the other person in the captain's room and barked, "D\*mn, do these batch of students have no bloody guts?"

"They are just being rational. The provocation you arranged is too low-level. Any child with a bit of intelligence would be able to see that something wasn't right." The one who spoke was a middle-aged man dressed in a clean pressed major uniform. His air was dignified, and the flecks of white in his sideburns made him appear mature and reliable, a stark contrast against the captain's crude messiness.

The major passed a bottle of white wine over with a smile. The captain harrumphed, but accepted it, twisted the cap open, and began chugging it down.

"Don't drink so fast. Why are you taking out your anger on yourself?" chided the major.

"D\*mmit, isn't there a single one of these little bastards who is more hot-tempered? After all these years, this is the first time I've seen something like this," said the captain in frustration.

Mind you, his task was to assess the students' capabilities and personalities. Provoking them right from the start had always worked very well for him, because there would always be that one or two hot-headed and impulsive brats who would jump out for him to use as an example. This would give him the opportunity to assess the students' attitudes when faced with overwhelming force.

"Well, it's not that there aren't any. They've just been restrained." The major walked over to the screen and replayed the previous footage. On the screen, they could see that there had been a few people who had stood up to protest, but they had been quickly stopped by the people beside them. The scene between Qi Long and Ling Lan was also noted by the two men.

The major enlarged one of the images. It was one of the students from the Central Scout Academy. He was tugging on his teammate's arm, using his gaze to point out a certain direction to his teammate, as if reminding the other that he should be aware of the situation.

Following the student's line of sight, the major scrolled across the image, and Ling Lan's, Wu Jiong's, and Li Yingjie's teams came into view.

"Do you not notice that these students were all waiting for the reactions of these few people?" said the major, pointing at Ling Lan's area.

"Tch, you think I can't see that? While I was speaking, this bunch of brats had obviously been enraged by me, but they all chose to look there at the first moment..." The captain had noticed.

"That's right. I did a brief check and these students should be from the Central Scout Academy. You too know that a whole 10% of the First Military Academy student population comes from the Central Scout Academy. It goes without saying that within our military academy, the Central Scout Academy faction has the most members...

"But, it is also the one with the least cohesion!" The spaceship's captain's face was filled with disdain. He himself had not come out from the Central Scout Academy, so he did not bear much good will for the Central Scout Academy. Even though the people who graduated from the Central Scout Academy were generally more talented and more capable than students from the regular scout academies like them, there was just too much infighting within their ranks. They were like a plateful of scattered sand.

"Yes. This is also why although the Central Scout Academy faction has the most people, it has never managed to become the top faction within the military academy! Forcefully being suppressed by the other scout academy factions... this is their tragedy." These past three years in particular, the Central Scout Academy faction had been even more sluggish <sup>3</sup> — it had not even managed to rank within the top three.

"That's not the only point. Although the students from the Central Scout Academy are all very strong and talented, in our military academy, none of them managed to become the strongest in the school. This is also why they have been unable to make their faction the number one faction." The captain bluntly pointed out the weakness of the Central Scout Academy. Even though its students were more talented and stronger than other students across the board, the one standing at the peak just wasn't any single one of them...

"True. Especially these last three years, there wasn't a single Central Scout Academy student within the top three. Even the strongest one is just at 5th place. Sigh, the well-established top Central Scout Academy has finally begun to decline..." The major was

affected by a wistful melancholy. Although he was not from the Central Scout Academy, his superior, mentor, and benefactor were all part of the Central Scout Academy faction. Thus, he still had a deep affection for the Central Scout Academy.

"However, this year might be different." The major's initially regretful gaze became focused in a split second. The students from the Central Scout Academy were surprisingly united this time — perhaps a true king had appeared among them, earning all of the students' deference. If that was the case, the power balance of the factions within the military academy may very well go through a momentous change with their addition.

"Perhaps, the assessment this time will give us a pleasant surprise." He and the captain had never been satisfied over all these years, because the students' final decisions had never truly been the answer they wanted.

"You think?" The captain, who had never thought well of the Central Scout Academy, did not think much of the students from it. Infighting was a characteristic of the Central Scout Academy from the start — could this batch really be an exception?

"Then let us just wait and see!" said the major good-naturedly with a laugh, not at all bothered by his friend's scepticism.

"Sure. But, I need to make them stop holding back as soon as possible, otherwise we won't be able to see what we want to see." A sharp light entered the captain's eyes, and a great force of presence silently began to spread. At this moment, he was no longer that rough and arrogant captain, but was more like a wild beast from the depths of the universe, powerful and dangerous!



Ling Lan had long known that these two days and one night would not be so peaceful, but she still could not put a finger on the reason for the captain's provocation. If this was really a test — then what were they testing for? Before she could figure anything out, an unexpected conflict occurred before her eyes.

The first half of the first day went by peacefully. Although the crew members would still throw in the occasional taunt, the now calm students managed to resist rising to the bait. However, this peace vanished by the time night came.

At dinner time, Ling Lan's group of six came to the cafeteria and ate a simple dinner. The ship provided a buffet-style meal, but the options were very limited, and the taste was not very good. Although the students were rather unhappy about it, they knew that they were now on the other's home ground, and so could only tolerate.

However, there were some things that could not be resolved just by tolerating them. Very soon, when a student who had finished eating was walking out of the cafeteria, he was shoved back. Quickly, several hulking crewmen had surrounded the student. One of the crewmen rubbed at his own shoulder, demanding arrogantly for the student to kneel and apologise to him for hurting him when he had crashed into him.

The student naturally would not agree to this humiliating style of apologising. He argued with logic, saying that he had been walking just fine — it was the other who had suddenly changed directions when they were about to cross each other to bump into him. He had no time at all to react, which was why the collision happened. If anyone should apologise, it should be the crew member.

*"Looks like, that captain has made his move!"* Ling Lan's brow furrowed. Could it be that the other wanted to see the students' combat ability? Or was he trying to see how the other students would react to this sort of scenario?

*"To observe coldly from the sidelines, or take on the confrontation with righteous anger? Or perhaps they are trying to assess the students' true hearts?"* Ling Lan looked at Han Jijyun, an inkling of realisation in her mind.

Han Jijyun also seemed to have figured something out. Without sharing a word, the frowning duo simultaneously thought of the time they had taken the enrolment tests for the Central Scout Academy.

"It's exactly like the Central Scout Academy's test." Not long after, Han Jijyun smiled in realisation.

"This time, the main content of the test is most probably unity!" Unlike before, Ling Lan slowly deduced the test's content.

"I agree!" Han Jijyun nodded. He too felt that this was the greatest possibility.

Against such a large bevy of well-built crewmen with deep bonds and great rapport, it was impossible to fight back as an individual or with the strength of several small teams. To obtain equal standing, they needed to have sufficient power to defend

themselves and their rights — the weak have no right to speak...

The disadvantage of their numbers required them to band together as one unit. Of course, individual performance and combat power would also be important areas of observation — how the students united would depend on the individual abilities of several people, while combat power was a condition to achieve equal status. Otherwise, even if they banded together, it would be a waste of energy if they did not have the strength to back it up.

"Killing many birds with one stone! A great plan!" Han Jijun commented, tone admiring. The person who designed this test condition was undoubtedly a genius.



The major in the captain's room suddenly felt his nose itch, which caused him to sneeze loudly. He rubbed his nose and said bemusedly, "That's strange, why would I sneeze for no reason? Could the temperature regulation system be down?"

"Checking... the temperature regulation system is functioning normally. Major Wang Yi, your senses are mistaken." The ship's mainframe did a self-check in response to the major's query and swiftly replied.

"Is that so? Could it be that someone is thinking of me? <sup>4</sup>" wondered the major.

"This question... there is no detailed data for me to analyse. Please excuse me for not being able to provide an answer!" The mainframe answered dutifully, even though it felt that the major's question was really very pointless and idiotic...

# Chapter 208

## Ling Lan's Plan!

By now, the commotion at the cafeteria entrance had drawn many of the students' attention as they gathered around the scene. Of course, there were quite a few with angry expressions, but they still did not move recklessly. The crew members around were observing them closely — the moment the students made any strange movements, the crew would probably surge forward to show them their place.

Ling Lan glanced coldly at this scene, and suddenly turned to look at Xie Yi and said, "Xie Yi, go invite Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie over!"

Xie Yi's gaze brightened. "Yes!" Since Ling Lan was giving him this order, it meant that he must have acknowledged the role he had set for himself. Even though Luo Lang had said that Boss Lan already recognised him, before he received a clear response from Ling Lan, Xie Yi had still felt somewhat unsettled, afraid that Luo Lang had only been consoling him.

Xie Yi was very good at diplomacy — very soon, Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie had both arrived at the cafeteria with their teams in tow.

"Boss Lan, I heard you were looking for us?" Wu Jiong's expression was surprised. Ling Lan very rarely looked for him, and whenever he did, it always meant something big was about to happen, just like with the grand armed melee back then.

In contrast, with an awkward expression, Li Yingjie called out in a low voice, "Boss Lan!" The pride in his bones made him reluctant to address Ling Lan this way, but ever since Wu Jiong had changed the way he addressed Ling Lan to 'Boss Lan', Li Yingjie had drawn weird looks from everyone in Class-A and Class-B when he had once called Ling Lan by name directly. Even the members of his own team had stared at him strangely. This gave him no choice but to bend his proud neck and lower his head, acknowledging Ling Lan as the boss of their year through clenched teeth.

Ling Lan actually did not mind how others addressed her — whether they called her Boss Lan or called her name directly, it was all fine. They were both just forms of address. She signalled for them to look towards the centre of the conflict, and asked



quietly, "What do you both think?"

"Eh? Him? Boss Lan, that's a student from our academy, called Peng Jiayen. He used to be in a merit class, but managed to achieve an upset in his final year to enter Class-B, and then successfully qualified for the First Men's Military Academy. He's talented." Wu Jiong was very familiar with all the outstanding students in the academy, swiftly listing out the other's background without any trouble.

Wu Jiong had just finished telling them about the student's background when the conflict escalated once more. Several crew members of the ship had lost their patience. They took action — two of the crew members stepped forward in unison, attempting to grab the student and force him to his knees to apologise.

Students from the Central Scout Academy were not as weak as they had imagined — sensing the threat, the student twisted his body, evading the two men's pincer attack. However, just as he finished dodging, two more crew members suddenly attacked, leaving no room for the student to evade anymore. He was instantly caught and brought under their control.

This series of attacks happened in the blink of an eye. The other students on the scene did not have any time to react and that student had already been subdued by the crew. Not just that, the other side had even used pure force to push the student to his knees...

This scene caused rage to emerge on all the students faces; even the expressions of Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie, and the others with them who had just arrived could not help but change. The other side was really going too far in their bullying.

Ever since they had gone through the grand armed melee, as the Central Scout Academy students had fought valiantly together to cooperatively defeat the 10th grade, they had developed a good comradeship with one another. This was unlike the other years before them whose students were mostly indifferent towards one another with clear divisions between the classes. Now, seeing one of their schoolmates who had fought alongside them being shamed this way, all the Central Scout Academy students found themselves growing angry on his behalf!

Several students even reached out to help, but were forced back by the crew...

Still, the palpable agitation of the surrounding students made the crew members cautious in their continued bullying of that student. At this moment, a leading crew

member said with a mocking huff, "This matter has nothing to do with all of you. It's our personal business! Those who tried to take action earlier, I forgive you all for your emotional loss of control. But if you all dare to try and help again now, don't blame us for not staying polite!"

That said, the crew members who had been initially been watching the show from a distance all drew in to close ranks. The crewmen had already been stronger than the students by a clear margin, and now their numbers had grown — this made many of the students begin to waver...

However, as Ling Lan, Wu Jiong, and company were at their backs, and since they had not indicated that they were going to let this slide, the students did not retreat and disperse, merely holding their ground without taking further action. The two sides were abruptly submerged in silence in an unofficial face-off. The atmosphere became tense in an instant.

"Boss Lan, we cannot just tolerate this offence!" Although Wu Jiong did not want to escalate things, he also did not want to be this cowardly.

By the side, Li Yingjie nodded in agreement, full of support for Wu Jiong's words. They were all prideful elites — this baseless humiliation could not be borne.

Right then, a faint smile pulled on the corner of Ling Lan's lips. Her initially cold and forbidding face was not warmed much by this trace of a smile. Instead, the surrounding people who were familiar with Ling Lan only felt a deeper chill pervade their hearts. They could clearly feel the temperature emanating from Ling Lan drop by another few degrees.

Ling Lan tugged lightly at her sleeves and said calmly, "Three years ago, you all accompanied me in orchestrating a grand armed melee. Now, would you all still have the guts to make a big play with me?" That said, the corners of her eyes lifted slightly as she peered at them through slitted eyes and waited for their response.

Ling Lan's question caused a shudder to run through Wu Jiong's and Li Yingjie's hearts. Wu Jiong calmed himself for a moment before asking warily, "What are you planning?"

Ling Lan threw a glance at Qi Long, and Qi Long and the other four members of her team spread out to surround the three of them. Ling Lan also did not forget to instruct Little Four to scramble the surveillance equipment in this area, manufacturing a false

image to fool the monitors.

After receiving the all clear from Little Four, in a voice only loud enough for the three of them to hear, Ling Lan said, "Take complete control of the ship!"

Wu Jiong jerked his head up to stare dumbly at Ling Lan; even Li Yingjie was so shocked by Ling Lan's words that he could only gape at her.

"What? You don't dare?" Ling Lan's gaze swept over to stare at them, a trace of mockery in the corners of her eyes.

Wu Jiong was after all a child from a military family. He quickly regained his composure and asked softly, "You have confidence? That captain does not seem easy to handle." There may be many crew members, but the number of students was also nothing to scoff at. With Ling Lan's reputation and their status and capabilities, it was entirely possible to unite the Central Scout Academy students to form a resistance.

The only worrisome point was that captain. The other was most definitely a Qi-Jin stage expert, if not a Domain-stage one. If Ling Lan was not injured, they might have been able to succeed by attacking altogether.

"Also, the ship must have a protective mecha squad. Once the mecha make a move, we won't have any chances of winning." By now, Li Yingjie had also regained his calm, and brought up the issue of the ship's combat resources.

"Mecha? We just need to lock down the mecha hold and it'll be fine. Unless they want to destroy the ship to perish together, the mecha will just be accessories..." It's not like they were implacable enemies, determined to kill each other; the other side would definitely never mobilise their mecha squad.

Ling Lan's words enlightened Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie. They were the new students of the First Men's Military Academy, the warriors who would protect the nation in the future — the people on this ship would never dare to truly harm them, so they really did not have anything to fear.

Of course, this did not exclude the possibility that this ship had been sent by the enemy. But if that was the case, things would not end well for them even if they did not fight back. Thus, they might as well take the risk and perhaps win a chance of survival.

Wu Jiong's heart began to pound. If they truly managed to take control of the entire ship, this would definitely be an unprecedented miracle, for he believed that the previous cadets would never have dared to attempt this... his palms began to sweat, and his face turned somewhat red from his excitement.

Similarly, Li Yingjie also figured it out. He shared a look filled with irrepressible excitement with Wu Jiong, and then they both turned as one to nod solemnly at Ling Lan. They would take this wild gamble together with Ling Lan.

Seeing the both of them agree, Ling Lan let out an internal sigh of relief. Although she had confidence in herself, without the support of Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie, this grand and ambitious endeavour would undoubtedly be much more difficult.

Ling Lan immediately let Little Four create a tactical map with the crew members' positions plotted on it and sent a copy each to Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie. After that, she swiftly outlined her plan.

Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie nodded repetitively as they listened, their eyes shining brighter and brighter. What they had initially thought would be a campaign with very small chances of success changed into a real possibility under Ling Lan's clever planning.

It looked like what Ling Lan had said about taking control of the ship was not a brash and foolhardy attempt, but an idea formed through careful consideration. Otherwise, he would not have this detailed tactical map ready at hand. It looked like while they had been stewing in their forced tolerance, Ling Lan had already been making preparations for her next move.

Although they did not know how Ling Lan had obtained this tactical map with all the positioning of the crew, they believed that this map was real. They had taken a quick glance at several spots as noted on the map, and had found that those crew members had pretty much been standing right where the map said they would be...

Wu Jiong's admiration towards Ling Lan rose once again, a strange bitterness rising in his mouth at the same time — he could once again feel the huge gap between Ling Lan and himself. Whether it was in terms of strategy or in terms of mental state, he was weaker than Ling Lan by too much. He too had been equally unhappy with the captain's attitude during his welcome speech and the myriad taunts of the crew, but he had only chosen to tolerate all the way, only thinking to safely get through these 2

days and 1 night.

Even when he saw a schoolmate being bullied and shamed for no reason, although he was indignant, he had still only been thinking of how to help that student get through that particular trial and let the matter die down... yes, in his mind, even as he thought of ways to help his own schoolmate, he was also keeping in mind that he should do his best not to offend the other party, because this was their territory...

But Ling Lan was different. The fact that his preparations were so thorough meant that Ling Lan had been thinking of taking control of the entire ship from the start. He had never even entertained the idea of just tolerating the crew's abuse in silence. Perhaps Ling Lan's way of thinking was extremely radical, but godd\*mn was it exciting! It made his heart race — *this was what a man should do...* he truly could not match up to Ling Lan!

Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie led their respective teams away from the scene to carry out their tasks. As the two left, their expressions were extremely interesting. In contrast to Wu Jiong's bitter resignation, Li Yingjie's expression was undoubtedly much more complex. All kinds of envy-jealousy-hate flashed across it, only to end in a helpless sigh as he left downcast...

Finding that the person he wanted to overcome was so unassailably strong on all fronts, no matter how proud or unyielding Li Yingjie was, he could only let go of his competitive spirit. He knew now that he could no longer rival Ling Lan in this life, because he had already lost the courage to fight against Ling Lan. Just thinking of a head on battle with the other made his heart feel unimaginably weak and feeble.

# Chapter 209

## Move!

After Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie left the cafeteria silently with their teams, Qi Long approached Ling Lan and said, "Boss, what do we do next?"

With his capabilities, he had naturally heard Ling Lan's speech on taking control of the ship as well — though of course this was also because Ling Lan had no intention of hiding it from him to begin with. Qi Long was thoroughly fired up by Ling Lan's plan, ready to move.

This was his boss, forever daring to do what others would not dare to do! Qi Long's heart was bursting with pride!

"You are required here to hold the fort. Delay for us as long as possible — attract and hold the crew's attention," instructed Ling Lan in a low voice. Qi Long's task was very important. According to her plan, it would be best if Qi Long could fish out the captain from his room.

"Later, first let Luo Lang step up to help Peng Jiayen! You stay put and keep an eye on things. Wait for my final order!" Ling Lan's expression was extremely serious. Whether or not things would go smoothly on their end depended on the situation here with Qi Long; she hoped everything would turn out well.

"Got it, Boss!" Qi Long replied solemnly.

"Xie Yi!"

"Here, Boss!" Xie Yi replied hurriedly.

"While Luo Lang is holding everyone's attention, you go and gather all the students of Class-A and Class-B from the cafeteria, and get them to come back to the main hall. Remember, do it stealthily. If you can't, it's better not to move at all than to move recklessly!"

Their plan did not have many steps, but each step required finesse. Moreover, Ling Lan

did not want the students to leave the cafeteria en masse — this would make those crew members suspicious.

"Understood, Boss," replied Xie Yi somewhat nervously. Ling Lan's request was not easy; his task would definitely be very challenging. However, Xie Yi did not want to disappoint Ling Lan.

After assigning these tasks, Ling Lan brought Lin Zhong-qing and Han Jijun with her out of the cafeteria into the main hall.

Right now, there was already a significant number of Central Scout Academy students gathered there. They were almost all Class-A and Class-B people. While she had been arranging things with Qi Long and the others, it seemed that Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie had not been idle.

Seeing Ling Lan appear, the spirits of all these students rallied, fighting spirit filling their eyes. Earlier, back when Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie had called them out, they had told them that Boss Lan was going to lead them in playing a grand game today.

Everyone was wondering what this 'grand game' was referring to; many of them were guessing whether it would be like the grand armed melee, but against the crew. Thinking of the possibility, their blood began to boil with excitement. Ever since the grand armed melee, they had not encountered a stage as thrilling as that again. They had really missed that feeling. Furthermore, they did not have a favourable impression of the ship's captain and the crew — it could perhaps even be said that they hated them. As such, they were extremely willing to engage the crew in a vigorous battle.

Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie were currently staking out a corner each, quite a crowd gathered around each of them. When they saw Ling Lan enter the room, they nodded at her silently, signalling to her that they were ready.

However, Ling Lan did not say anything in response nor signal the attack. Instead she walked back to her seat and sat down, at the same time telling the others to do the same. "Watch the show for now!"

Just as everyone took a seat, baffled, rousing cheers rang out from the cafeteria, along with bellows of rage from the crew. A Central Scout Academy student ran into the hall, shouting, "Luo Lang has attacked!"

Luo Lang's actions represented the decision of the uncrowned king, Ling Lan. He

would not bow his head to the opponent. It was just like with the grand armed melee back then — he would rather fight valiantly, never submitting even if he might lose terribly.

Everyone turned to look with expectant faces at the seated Ling Lan, waiting for him to give the order.

"Wait a little longer!" Ling Lan glanced at her communicator and said calmly.

At this time, several Class-A students were trickling in from the cafeteria. When they saw the group assembled within the hall, pleasant surprise flashed through their eyes. However, they remembered Xie Yi's warning, so they did not react outwardly. They made their way almost casually to Ling Lan's side, demeanours natural as they found empty armchairs to sit in. It was as if they did not know one another, or perhaps were not very close; everyone treated each other indifferently.

Right then, Ling Lan appeared at ease, but she was in fact anxiously collecting data on the situation around the whole ship with Little Four. Little Four was very reliable. He had already managed to infiltrate the mainframe to use its surveillance systems to monitor the entire spaceship. He then marked the danger zones and areas where the crew were gathered on a map, to facilitate Ling Lan's subsequent actions.

At this time, on the ship, almost everyone's attention was focused on the cafeteria. Even the captain in the captain's room was also focused intently on the conflict in the cafeteria, only checking on the students in the main hall every once in a while.

However, by now, the video feed the captain was seeing was an edited version by Little Four. In his screen, there were only a small few within the main hall, and those few were scattered loosely around the hall with no signs of grouping together.

Meanwhile, Little Four placed the people 'missing' from the hall within the feed of the cafeteria. In this way — in and out, plus and minus — Little Four managed to conceal the movement of the students and the true situation in the main hall.

Soon, there were over a hundred people gathered around Ling Lan. Ling Lan finally gave Little Four the signal to let Qi Long make his move!



Inside the cafeteria, the standoff between the two sides had been broken due to Luo Lang's interference. The crew members turned to anger in their shame, and tried to band together to mob Luo Lang. But who was Luo Lang? He was the third rank on the verge of obtaining second rank (Ling Lan excluded)! Although he might still be a distance away from Qi Long, he was about the same level as Wu Jiong. If not for the fact that Wu Jiong's combat style countered his, he would not have had to bear the frustration of being the academy's third rank.

After Luo Lang beat off the third batch of crewmen who wanted to teach him a lesson, he was beginning to feel the strain. The crew members were all very strong and capable — if they had not been intent on subduing him without harming him, he might very likely have not been able to fend off these three batches.

"Tsk! Actually being beaten by a little lady. You all are such a disgrace!" Along with this voice, a young man appeared at the entrance to the cafeteria. His hairstyle was stylish, his expression mocking, his gaze wicked as he ogled at Luo Lang, making Luo Lang feel extremely uncomfortable.

When the crew saw the young man, they called out in unison, "Leader!" It was unexpected that this crew member who looked to be the youngest of them all was actually their leader. Luo Lang and the waiting Qi Long both frowned in silent accord, caution rising in their hearts.

"Tch tch tch, who knew there would be such an exquisite item... why don't you warm my bed tonight?" said the young man predatorily, as if having discovered some great thing.

"Shut up, bastard!" screamed Luo Lang in response, his face turning red with anger from the other's offensive words.

But this angry appearance only made him even more enchantingly gorgeous! The lovely picture he made stunned all the crew members present. If their hearts and minds had been less steady, they might really have become bewitched by Luo Lang.

A keen light flashed through the young man's eyes, but he continued to mock irreverently, "Asking me to shut up? Then, you are inviting me to take action instead?" That said, with a quick dash, he was reaching out his fingers towards Luo Lang's jaw.

It could be called an attack, but could also be called an attempt at molestation.

The other's action caused Luo Lang to become even angrier. He immediately blocked the other's fingers, kicking out fiercely with his right leg at the same time.

"Whump!" The other reacted quickly as well, blocking Luo Lang's attack with a leg of his own. The two of them retreated two steps back — it looked like it was a draw. The students cheered with raised arms for Luo Lang's impressive performance, but only Qi Long frowned lightly once more. He knew that the other's capability was likely slightly better — Luo Lang would have a tough fight now.

Luo Lang too knew this very well. The rage consuming his heart was abruptly pushed aside, his entire being becoming cool and collected. This ability to swiftly adjust his emotional state made the young man's eyes light up, exclaiming in wonder in his heart. Who knew that this girlish youth before his eyes was actually so proficient at controlling his emotions? Just a moment ago he was still raging at the skies, and now, in the blink of an eye, he had become so calm and composed. The young man greatly admired this smooth transition and control. It should be known that unstable emotions would affect one's ability to perform — it was possible that it could add to one's strength, but it was much more likely to cause weakness instead.

"This punk!" Qi Long's initially furrowed brow eased. He had not expected Luo Lang to be so daring, actually activating his innate talent right now. Mind you, Luo Lang's innate talent was very dangerous — it was entirely possible to unleash a dark character instead. It was considered an unstable innate talent, and Luo Lang typically would not activate it.

It was probable that Luo Lang was feeling pressured by the task Boss Lan assigned to him. Now, with the addition of an opponent stronger than him, unwilling to just admit defeat, Luo Lang had chosen to take the risk and activate his innate talent.

Undoubtedly, Luo Lang's luck today was exceedingly good. The character his activation brought out turned out to be his cool persona, which was extremely suited for battle. This made Luo Lang's combat power rise exponentially — even Qi Long now was unsure whether he could beat Luo Lang under the influence of this persona.

Luo Lang and the young leader clashed again, and this time, Luo Lang was again pushed back by two steps, but the young leader retreated a whole four steps. This made the leader's expression shift. From that last crossing of blows, he could already

clearly sense the sudden increase in his opponent's strength. The youth who had initially been slightly weaker than him had suddenly become stronger than him by a hair, putting him at a disadvantage.

"What kind of abnormality is this?!" The young leader could not help but wonder silently. Mind you, he had always been called a prodigy, which was why he could enter the optimal peak of Refinement at such a young age, now just one insight and one chance short of entering Qi-Jin stage. In contrast, the opponent had originally been at the peak level of Refinement, but had suddenly shot up to a half step into Qi-Jin... yes, it was a level even closer to Qi-Jin than optimal peak. He had believed the level to be a myth, but it had unexpectedly appeared in reality, and he had just encountered it.

In the captain's room, the captain saw the young leader and Luo Lang's fight, and his eyes lit up. "Good. This brat may look like a sissy, but his explosive power is astonishingly horrifying. Lil' Ghost has met his match."

In the time it took him to say this, Luo Lang and the young leader had exchanged several more moves. Currently, the leader was beginning to have trouble keeping up with Luo Lang's moves. Everyone could see that the young leader was the one who was disadvantaged; this reality caused the faces of the crew members at the scene to change...

Right then, Qi Long received a message from Ling Lan. "Move!"

Without thinking, Qi Long darted out like an arrow, throwing his right fist straight at the young leader who was busily blocking Luo Lang's attacks.

# Chapter 210

## The Operation Begins!

Qi Long's speed was very fast, moving almost between blinks. Because the young leader was currently fully focused on Luo Lang, he was not on guard against a sneak attack from Qi Long. Thus, Qi Long's unexpected strike hit the other square in the face, and the young leader was sent flying by this one punch to crash heavily to the ground...

"Leader!" The crew members on the scene cried out in shock. They were shocked that their leader had been struck down with just one punch, and also furious at the other side's shameless sneak attack.

Seeing this, Luo Lang stopped attacking and stood to a side. He cast a discontented glance at Qi Long. "I could have handled him." This one glance was unimaginably flirtatious <sup>1</sup>!

Qi Long seemed oblivious — he only lifted up his right hand to reveal the communicator on his wrist. Luo Lang instantly understood — Boss Lan's orders must have arrived.



"Right now, the one that attacked, is he that youth's team leader?" In the captain's room, the major's interest was piqued by Qi Long who had abruptly attacked.

"He should be!" said the captain, frowning. He rather disliked this sneak attack method of Qi Long's.



Meanwhile, in the cafeteria, five or six furious crewmen leapt at Qi Long, prepared to teach this despicable punk a lesson.

Qi Long stood his ground, glaring coldly at these crewmen coming at him. Right before they could touch his body, he gave a great bellow, the Qi-Jin in his body circulating

rapidly as he stomped the ground heavily with his left foot. With the rebound force produced, he sprang into the air, and let loose with both legs...

"Bam!" "Bam!" "Bam!"...

Consecutive sounds of bodies being kicked rang out, and these crewmen were sent flying back like flower petals being scattered by a heavenly flower girl <sup>2</sup>. They fell heavily to the ground and tumbled to the side. One of the crewmen even ended up being bowled in Luo Lang's direction. Facing this sudden human projectile, Luo Lang shifted one small step, and with a slight twist of his body, the crewman grazed by him to crash into the ground...

At this moment, the young leader had already got back on his feet. Seeing Qi Long knocking down these crew members so easily, he could not help but exclaim with a dark expression, "Qi-Jin stage!"

These three words were hissed through clenched teeth. He would never have thought that such a monster would be concealed within this batch of new cadets. A 16-year-old at Qi-Jin stage... this was absolutely a legendary existence.

"Qi-Jin stage? How can this be?" The captain, who had been paying close attention to the situation in the cafeteria in his room, heard what the young leader said and could not help but shout.

The major smiled wryly, "Perhaps, the Central Scout Academy has been so quiet for so many years because they were focused on cultivating this monster..." *Ye Yifan, are you preparing your comeback now?*

"The military academy may really be in for an upheaval," sighed the major.

"If the other is really at Qi-Jin stage, Lil' Ghost is definitely no match for him!" said the captain with a grim countenance, "I must go and see." He could not afford to let the boat capsize in a ditch <sup>3</sup>. Failing to teach these fresh cadets a lesson, while his capable subordinates were beaten so badly they fell into a funk in the end.

"Mm, it's time for you to go quell the situation." The major was in full agreement. If they did not suppress that Qi-Jin stage fresh cadet, their test was likely to be nipped in the bud, for those students would definitely no longer have any fear of them.

"Don't worry, I will teach him a good lesson. On my turf, no one has ever dared be this

cocky." That said, the captain departed from his room.

The captain's movement was immediately reported by Little Four to Ling Lan. Ling Lan clenched a victory fist internally, mentally cheering a loud 'YES' — they had finally managed to hook the captain out of his room <sup>4</sup>...

However, they still needed to wait a little longer... Ling Lan held back the excitement in her heart. Her expression extraordinarily calm, she remained still in her seat, closely monitoring the captain's progress.

At this time, some of the students in the hall not from the Central Scout Academy were extremely curious over the large assembly of around 100 students around Ling Lan. One of them slunk up to a Central Scout Academy student right on the fringes of the group and asked softly, "I want to ask, what's the plan behind so many of you gathering here?"

The Central Scout Academy student was actually not very clear why Ling Lan had called them all here — he only knew that it would definitely be something big and exciting. He smiled apologetically at the student who asked, but did not reply verbally.

Seeing that the Central Scout Academy student had no intention of sating his curiosity, the other student could only give up and return back to his companions.

"Did you get any news?" asked one of his companions softly.

That student shook his head regretfully, but said firmly, "There must be some plot. They just do not want to let us know." He looked towards a pensive-looking youth, and could not help but ask him, "Third Elder Brother, what should we do now?"

The pensive youth was startled out of his thoughts by this question. He frowned as he lifted his head, and throwing a glance in Ling Lan's direction, he said, "Wait! So many people won't suddenly disappear. We'll definitely find out what they're up to in the end. "

Over this past half of the day, he had basically figured out that these students were all from the Central Scout Academy. In the past, the students of that academy had always been the object of their envy-jealousy-hate, but from now on, they were all standing at the same starting line.

And it was for precisely that reason that he was unwilling to be excluded by these

prodigies at this juncture...

"Okay, we'll do what you say, Third Elder Brother." These few people had only managed to qualify for the First Men's Military Academy because of him, so they were very deferential to him, willing to follow his will in all things.



When Ling Lan confirmed that the captain had entered the branch passage heading to the cafeteria, she knew that the time to act had arrived. She abruptly stood up, swept her gaze across the students around her, and said softly, "The game begins! Don't ask any questions. Just follow your own team leaders. A bit later on, they will explain what exactly we are planning to do."

Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie nodded at Ling Lan, and then they led 30 over people into passages in two different directions, leaving the main hall... a majority of the team members followed their team leaders, nonplussed, but the ten or so team leaders present all knew what they needed to do.

The passage that Wu Jiong chose was headed for the engine room — he needed to gain control of the engine room as soon as possible. It should be known that once the power was cut in the engine room, the spaceship would enter a paralysed state where all its systems would be unable to run normally. To take control of the ship, this place was indispensable. Due to the great importance of the engine room, Ling Lan had given this challenging task to Wu Jiong.

Meanwhile, Li Yingjie was headed for the living quarters of the crew. They needed to suppress the crew members inside at soonest notice. They could not allow the crew members to catch their breath and gather together to fight back.

Ling Lan swept her gaze over the remaining people in the room, and said coldly, "Follow me!"

She led the way out of the main hall, Han Jijyun and Lin Zhong-qing close behind her. The remaining students looked at each other in excitement, and then hurried to keep up, not daring to dawdle.

Ling Lan's task was the heaviest. The path she chose required them to take control of two places, one of which was the spaceship's central control room. Mind you, all the

facilities and procedures were coordinated and controlled from there. These included the power system, the gravitational system, the surveillance system, the weapons system, the mecha system, detection system, etcetera. All these systems were monitored and controlled by specialised staff. Ling Lan could still ignore the other systems, but to lock down the doors of the different sections, one needed to take control of that room.

Although Ling Lan was sure that the spaceship's side would not mobilise their mecha, Ling Lan decided to eliminate all possibility of that happening anyway. Therefore, Ling Lan decided to take control of the central control room and seal off the mecha hold where all the mecha were being kept so the other party would have no chance to even get close to the mecha!

Besides this place, the other place they needed to take control of was the captain's room behind the central control room. The core of the ship's mainframe was there — only by taking control of the captain's room could they crack the mainframe's authority and gain the right of control, thus truly obtaining the ship's control rights.

Originally, the captain's room was the hardest to conquer because the most capable captain was stationed there. However, due to Ling Lan's planning, this was no longer a problem. This made it much easier for Ling Lan and the students to gain the control rights of the spaceship.

Although the difficulty seemed much reduced, Ling Lan still did not let down her guard — because Little Four had warned her that there was still one person in the captain's room, and Ling Lan was unclear on that mysterious person's capabilities. This added a certain degree of uncertainty to their plan.

In the main hall, very soon, there was not a single Central Scout Academy student left.

"Third Elder Brother, which team should we follow?" One of the members of the group which had been watching Ling Lan and company closely could not help but ask anxiously.

"This one!" The one they called 'Third Elder Brother' still remembered who the head of that group was — it was that student who everyone reverentially called Boss Lan. He had the most interest in him.

This group of people carefully trailed behind Ling Lan's party, slowly following it



deeper into the passageway.

Ling Lan's party very quickly divided themselves into combat units, three to a team for a total of 12 teams. The odd man out, Ling Lan, was a solo team on her own. Every time they came to the hiding spot of a crew member, they handled it by pitting one team against one opponent.

To begin with, these students were exceptional prodigies of the Central Scout Academy; their combat prowess was not weak. On top of that, pitting three-man teams against each crew member let them breeze through all the way, bringing down all the concealed sentries without causing much of a stir.

However, they soon met an unforeseen incident. Perhaps the smooth sailing caused the Central Scout Academy students to somewhat lose their focus — when it came to the twelfth batch of sentry crewmen, they bumped into a tough nut to crack. A three-man attack actually did not manage to put down the opponent.

That person reacted quickly — he did not choose to fight back, instead moving towards the hidden warning alarm in his hand. Just when everyone's expressions changed, silently screaming 'oh shit', that person's hand halted abruptly right before it could touch the button. Then, there was a flash of a silhouette, and that person was down on the ground.

Only then did the students notice that Ling Lan, who had been watching their backs at the flank, had finally made a move. With lightning speed, she had struck the opponent unconscious.

Ling Lan swept a cold look over all of them, and the small team which had made a mistake automatically ducked their heads, cold sweat breaking out all over their bodies.

"Be more alert!" These three cold words let the three-man team breathe out a sigh of relief even as they felt consumed by shame.

"Yes!" The three of them answered quietly. They silently reminded themselves that they definitely could not lose focus and make such a mistake again, and lose face.

They did not want to see Ling Lan's disappointed gaze. Ling Lan's greatness had already become rooted in their hearts after 10 years of accumulation and reinforcement. They believed that Ling Lan would definitely reach the pinnacle of

strength; thus, they hoped to keep following Ling Lan. This was a wish born out of a deep admiration from the heart...

# Chapter 211

## New Members!

The three youths moved all of the unconscious sentry crewmen into one of the ship's rooms and locked it. Without someone to input the passcode on the panel outside, the people inside the room would not be able to get out. Ling Lan also did not forget to let Little Four disable their communicators, preventing the possibility of any of the opponents revealing their plan if they woke up earlier than expected.

By now, the students following Ling Lan could tell what Ling Lan's objective was. Although it sounded insane, everyone's blood was boiling at the thought. No one chose to withdraw, instead becoming even more excited, believing that this was truly what they should do...

They were youths who had just stepped out from the scout academy, and were right in their rebellious phase. They had countless fanciful dreams — they were still hot-blooded youths filled with boundless courage. They wanted to make something of themselves and were willing to put in the effort to do it, whatever the cost may be. Still wet behind the ears <sup>1</sup>, they had no fear. As young men, their wings of freedom had yet to be bound by reality...

Thus, their only thought now was that as long as they kept following Boss Lan before them, they could achieve things they never thought possible — insane things they never would have dreamed of... and all this was precisely what fed their confidence and pride!

"Third Elder Brother, they, they, they've gone mad! Completely crazy!" When the group trailing Ling Lan's party from afar finally saw what Ling Lan's party was doing, they were instantly scared sh\*tless <sup>2</sup>. Some of them were so scared that their bodies had even begun to tremble.

From the perspective of these students, Ling Lan's party's actions were undoubtedly a major crime of insubordination — actually daring to attack the people sent to escort them to their school... Had they given up on studying at the First Men's Military Academy?!

"Third Elder Brother, let's quickly tell the ship's crew. We must stop them. What they're doing will ruin our pathway to the military academy. They must be lunatics." A member suggested informing the ship's men, thinking that stopping Ling Lan's party's insane actions was the right thing to do.

"Idiot! Shut your mouth!" barked Third Elder Brother, "What do you all know?" Third Elder Brother looked ahead at where the figures had already disappeared and a gleam of intense light flashed across his eyes. Although attacking the crew seemed to be such an unthinkable act, the immediate impression being that the perpetrators must be mad... after giving the matter a little more thought, it was not necessarily so.

Mulling it over, from the very start of the journey, the captain's introduction had been filled with provocation, and the crew's attitudes had been even worse, their speech full of all kinds of contempt, mocking, taunts, and insults. Even with the students' clear tolerance and giving way, the other side had not let it rest, purposefully forcing that confrontation in the cafeteria, intentionally humiliating that student... all of this was testing the bottom line of the students.

In other words, this ship, from the captain to its crew, had never intended to make nice with them from the very beginning. Even if they tolerated again and again, the oppression and humiliation would have just gotten worse and worse, until the students could not take it anymore and exploded... this would have been the inevitable outcome. In that case, why shouldn't they go ahead and address the root of the problem?

That person must be thinking this way, which was why he was doing this! Admiration shone from Third Elder Brother's eyes. How daring was he to be able to make this decision? <sup>3</sup> And how great must his charisma be to be able to convince up to 100 students to willingly take this risk with him?

His thoughts went back to the cafeteria — the other Qi-Jin stage student, he too was an astounding existence. What role did he have to play in this?

*"He should be attracting everyone's attention, providing cover for their operation! The person who designed this plan is not just bold, but also very meticulous!"* Third Elder Brother had always been a smart guy; he very quickly figured things out. A wave of bitterness surged in his heart — he had once thought he was good enough to challenge these elites once they entered the military academy, but now from the looks of it, he had taken things too lightly. Just this Boss Lan alone — whether in terms of scheming

and guts, or realm <sup>4</sup> — was just too far away from him.

"Third Elder Brother, they will definitely fail. That captain is most definitely super strong — they absolutely won't be able to beat him. If we go with them, we will be mistaken as part of them..." reminded a member.

"So what if we're together? D\*mmmit, how can we sit out of such an awesome thing? Although we're not Central Scout Academy students, don't forget, we're also graduates of a scout academy, cadets of the military academy just like them..." said Third Elder Brother.

"If they fail, we will still be mocked and tormented by those crew members. We might as well join them and let the scales tip as far as it can in our favour... it's a waste of youth not to take crazy risks. I have decided to take the gamble, what about the rest of you?" Third Elder Brother felt his heartbeat speeding up, his blood starting to boil — even though failure would bring nothing good, but what if they managed to succeed?

This was definitely an incident that would shock the military academy — perhaps even up to the entire Federation! He bloody did not want to miss this.

"Third Elder Brother's decision is my decision!" His most loyal team members declared.

"Since you all have decided, then I'll of course join in..." Although there were still a few people on the team who hesitated, seeing that most of the members had agreed to fight it out, they could only grit their teeth and jump in since they did not want to hold their team back.

The team finally came to an accord. Meanwhile, Ling Lan's party had already disappeared into the passage ahead. Third Elder Brother made his members hurry up — if they were left behind by the other, then they would not be able to pitch in even if they wanted to.

Third Elder Brother was in the lead, and just whilst they were hurrying on their way, a cold and somewhat familiar voice suddenly rang out by his ear. "Since you all are interested, then come along!"

Third Elder Brother's footsteps abruptly stopped. His face shifted slightly, because he had identified the voice — it was the voice of that youth called Boss Lan.

The other team members were baffled by his sudden stop, and Third Elder Brother was suddenly heard to say, "Gao Jinyun, I look forward to working with you."

"Ling Lan, welcome to the team!" The cold voice responded swiftly. As expected, it was that Boss Lan.

"Boss, what are you mumbling to yourself for?" The team members were creeped out by Gao Jinyun's strange behaviour. One of the team members could not help but speak up to ask.

Gao Jinyun did not respond, only saying, "Hurry up and move forwards!"

"Ah? We'll be discovered by the team ahead if we move too fast," said a member worriedly.

"They have already discovered us a long time ago. Just now, they were just inviting us to join them." Gao Jinyun finally explained why he had been muttering to himself.

"So hurry up! No more chit chat!" said Gao Jinyun moodily. That Boss Lan actually possessed the ability to transmit verbal messages from a distance — what ability was this? Could it be a type of spiritual mutation?

"..." Gao Jinyun's words made everyone speechless. Who could have guessed that they had already long been discovered by the other party despite their caution? Thinking back, if they had decided back then to go tell on them, they may have been mercilessly attacked by the other party, ending up shoved into a small dark room just like those incapacitated crew members had been.

At this thought, the members could not help but look at Gao Jinyun gratefully. Once again, it was proven that following Third Elder Brother was not wrong.

The moody Gao Jinyun never would have known that his team members' trust in him would increase once more because of this. They even decided in their hearts that after this, no matter what decision Gao Jinyun made, they would agree unconditionally. This gave him a bunch of stubbornly united team members. In the future, this unity would be what allowed his team to perform exceptionally, securing their spot as the second main force of Ling Lan's entourage...

*"Boss, I did pretty good, right?"* Little Four smugly begged for praise from Ling Lan in the mind-space. Earlier, he had used the advanced technology of the learning space to

convert Ling Lan's voice into coded supersonic waves which could only be successfully received by the specified person.

Ling Lan said nonchalantly, *"Not bad at all! Little Four, keep it up!"* Honestly though, Ling Lan really thought what Little Four did was unnecessary. There had really been no need to make things so complicated — he had just needed to transmit her voice through the sound systems already within the ship and let it out within the vicinity of the other group. Even if the message was heard by a few more people, so what? Still, she would not burst Little Four's bubble and discourage him. Since Little Four had the interest to do it, then she would leave him to it, as long as he did not find it troublesome.

*"However, don't forget to cover us. The opponent must not discover our movements!"* Ling Lan reminded worriedly. She was just afraid that Little Four would get too caught up in his play and forget his main task. The reason why their path had gone so smoothly, not being discovered by the central control room despite taking out so many sentries, was all because Little Four had created fake video feeds, showing the opponent that everything was going on as normal.

*"Got it, Boss!"* Little Four said, disgruntled. Would he make such a low-level mistake? Why did Boss always ignore what he said? He was a god of the virtual world! He could handle this type of small case without any errors even if he were asleep...

Leaving aside Little Four's grumbles within the mind-space, at this time, the other people in Ling Lan's party had also sensed Gao Jinyun's party's movements. When Han Jijyun heard the soft susurrations of footsteps coming from behind them, his expression could not help but change.

The footsteps sounded rather disorganised, so it looked like the incoming people would not be few. Had they been discovered by the ship's crew?

The other students also began to become restless. Lin Zhong-qing turned to look at Ling Lan, asking her whether he should lead some people over to hold them off.

Only then did Ling Lan speak up to explain, "Don't worry, they are our allies!"

Hearing this, the hearts of everyone there relaxed instantly. The initially tense atmosphere dissipated as they patiently waited for Gao Jinyun's party to catch up.

The moment Gao Jinyun approached Ling Lan's party, he could see everyone stopped

there waiting for his party. Thirty pair of bright eyes stared at them in unison, making him feel a tremendous pressure.

"We are students from Huoyun City <sup>5</sup> Scout Academy. I am called Gao Jinyun..." Gao Jinyun straightened his attitude, and began introducing his party to the other.

"We'll do full introductions later. Jijyun, go arrange it!" Ling Lan coolly interrupted Gao Jinyun, and then immediately turned to head into the depths of the passage. The students did not dare to dawdle, following closely...

Gao Jinyun reflexively rubbed his nose, silently noting to himself that this Boss Lan was really hard to talk to...

With the addition of Gao Jinyun's party, Ling Lan's party now had more than 40 people. As they did not know the capabilities of Gao Jinyun's party, Han Jijyun did not split the teams, grouping everyone together as one team to move together.

This column of people did not meet any other unexpected issues along the way. Finally, they neared Ling Lan's first objective, the spaceship's central control room.



# Chapter 212

## Disguised Infiltration!

Ling Lan halted, and with a flick of her right arm, the Central Scout Academy students moved with utmost cooperation, dashing to one side to stick closely to the passage walls. Gao Jinyun's party was off by a beat, but they did not mess up. Some of their members just did not dodge as adeptly as the students from the Central Scout Academy, seeming somewhat clumsy in comparison.

This direct comparison showed the difference in skill levels instantly; Gao Jinyun's face felt hot with shame. He silently decided that when he entered the academy, he would definitely train his party up well, to avoid shaming themselves again in front of Ling Lan in future.

Ling Lan signalled for the students to stay in place and not move. Then, with a nimble flash step, she had arrived at the doorway of the central control room. The doors were tightly sealed — entering or exiting required a passcode.

*"Little Four, how many people can you confirm inside?"* Ling Lan asked Little Four silently.

*"There are 53 staff members, and 10 guards."* Little Four projected the scene inside the central control room faithfully in Ling Lan's mindspace.

*"The opponent has the advantage in numbers. Breaking in forcefully may not allow us to take control quickly. The other side are likely to find time to send out the news of our attack."* Ling Lan's brow furrowed, finding the situation somewhat out of her expectations. She had initially thought that since it was a meal time, the staff members inside would be fewer — unexpectedly, there wasn't that much fewer than normal.

*"Boss, I can instantly seal off their communication equipment!"* Little Four became excited. This was his chance to shine! It was time to show Boss how awesome he could be.

*"And the weapons?"* Ling Lan threw an icy glance at the smug Little Four, instantly suppressing the other's flames of arrogance. Indeed, all the staff members inside were

equipped with beam handguns. If they just charged in, the other side need only find a chance to pull their guns and shoot, and some of their party might unfortunately die here.

Ling Lan did not believe that under this sudden and unexpected attack, the people inside could still keep calm and judge the situation accurately. It would already be a blessing if they did not just shoot indiscriminately all at once — if by any chance a student were to fall here, she would not be able to live with herself.

Little Four was deeply struck by Ling Lan's words. He could only squat down and draw circles on the ground, busying himself with self-reflection...

Should she use a large-scale spiritual attack? Ling Lan silently speculated. She actually had a solution — she could sense that the people inside were not people with awakened innate talents on the spiritual front; so, her spiritual attacks could totally incapacitate all of them.

However, Ling Lan had one reservation, because Ling Xiao and Mu Shui-qing did not want others to know of this ability of hers. As veteran warriors, they knew the importance of keeping a trump card. In critical moments, that could be the ultimate move that would save one's life.

Ling Lan took this advice to heart. Although spiritual attacks were not her only ace in the hole, no one would ever complain about having too many trump cards. Thus, Ling Lan had nodded and agreed.

Ling Lan did not like to go against her word. Since she had already promised her father and her master not to use spiritual attacks unless absolutely necessary in a life-or-death situation, Ling Lan would hold true to that. Therefore, she decisively threw out this option and tried to think of another way.

Ling Lan began to go through anything that could help their operation, and suddenly, a thought came to her mind. She recalled those sentries who had been struck down by them — could they maybe try to use the uniforms and weapons of those men?

Ling Lan immediately returned to Han Jijyun's side, and quietly outlined her plan. Han Jijyun felt that the idea was excellent, and the other team leaders by his side also nodded in approval as they heard the plan. As long as the other party had just a beat of hesitation and uncertainty, that would be their chance.

Although the other side had more people, the combat ability of the staff members were not very strong. As long as the other side did not find a chance to pull their guns and begin shooting en masse, the cadets would definitely be able to keep the situation under control. Their chances of winning were undoubtedly still very high.

All young and courageous scout students were willing to take risks — everyone felt that this plan was worth a shot.

And so, Ling Lan led the group back to the room where they had put the sentries in. Before they entered, Ling Lan let Little Four check to see if any of the men had woken up. After confirming that they were all still unconscious, they opened the door. Everyone rushed in, and very soon, all the sentries' clothes and weapons had been lifted off their bodies.

During this time, Little Four had done a quick scan of the ship, and found that the teams moving around the ship were in groups of 10 men. As such, it looked like the first batch to enter the central control room should not exceed 10 people.

After listening to Little Four's report, Ling Lan was even more certain. This was definitely a spaceship run by military men, because the arrangement of 10 people per unit was precisely the smallest mobile unit of the official Federation army (with the exception of mecha squads).

Inside the room, everyone quickly changed into the sentry uniforms. Even though they were only 16 years old right now, their bodies were already not that much different from that of an adult's. At a glance, it was almost impossible to notice anything off.

Ling Lan was the only one who put on the uniform and then immediately took it off again, because Ling Lan was not the well-built manly type. Her muscles were all leanness and graceful lines — it was impossible to tell she was a combat master when she was not circulating her Qi or actually fighting. Her entire stature was a bit more slender than regular males, so the uniforms were obviously too big on her, not at all fitting.

Everyone agreed that Ling Lan might as well not wear the uniform, because it would be obvious at a glance that she was in disguise, making the disguise completely pointless.

Ling Lan smiled wryly; the difference between genders was still apparent. However,

Ling Lan very quickly centred herself again, because there was an even more delicate man in her party, Luo Lang... at that thought, she immediately had no more regrets.

(Ling Lan, don't you think there is something wrong with the way you are thinking? You are a girl, while Luo Lang is a boy...) <sup>1</sup>

In order to ensure safety, Ling Lan, Han Jijyun, along with several intelligent-type team leaders discussed several action plans inside this sealed room. Among these, Gao Jinyun's performance stood out. He provided multiple possible scenarios that could happen once they entered the central control room, as well as the opponent's possible responses; this made the other team leaders from the Central Scout Academy hold a higher opinion of him.

The students of the Central Scout Academy were a haughty bunch, never ever entertaining the idea that there could be better prodigies than themselves in the other scout academies. So, when Gao Jinyun had first joined them, they had not thought much of him and his party, their attitudes clearly cold and indifferent. If not for the fact that Gao Jinyun's party had performed acceptably all this way, they might have blatantly revealed expressions of disdain.

But this time, many of the scenarios that Gao Jinyun described were things they themselves had not thought of. This made them understand that Gao Jinyun was not a simple character, and their initial bit of contempt slowly disappeared as they began to treat Gao Jinyun as an equal.

Unnoticed by the others, Ling Lan and Han Jijyun shared a glance, the meaning of which only they knew.

At the end, each of the team leaders accepted their own tasks and returned to their respective teams. The moment Gao Jinyun returned, several team members surreptitiously gave him a thumbs up, showing their deep respect for their leader. No matter how composed Gao Jinyun was typically, at this moment, even he could not prevent the corner of his lips from curling up into a slight smile...

Gao Jinyun wanted to say something humble, say that he had only thought of all these due to the inspiration from the others... Just as he opened his mouth to speak, he suddenly stopped, and all of his initial glee and satisfaction disappeared. He looked towards Han Jijyun, who was currently discussing the final details with Ling Lan, with a complicated expression. Just then, he had realised that those ideas and scenarios he

had suggested had all been completed under the other's careful indirect guidance. In other words, without knowing it, he had been manipulated by the other.

*"F\*ck, who are these people?!"* Gao Jinyun, who had originally been confident in his own intelligence, felt his ego being struck once more. Could it be that only aberrants existed beside aberrants? Still, Gao Jinyun was not someone who could not tell good from bad. The other had clearly been trying to help integrate him into their party with his actions...

Subsequently, the first batch of members to enter the central control room was selected. They were the ten strongest scout students excepting Ling Lan, while Lin Zhong-qing would take on the role of impersonating the leader of the sentry team.

Ling Lan led all of them swiftly back to the doors of the central control room. To save time, Ling Lan stepped up immediately, letting Little Four crack the passcode for this door.

Of course, in the eyes of the others, all of this was Ling Lan's doing. All they saw was their Boss Lan standing at the door staring at it for about one second, and then his fingers flew over the touchscreen, leaving behind trailing afterimages. Several seconds later, he suddenly stopped and calmly told them the passcode...

They were once again in awe of Boss Lan's greatness. Who could have expected that the combat-powerful Boss Lan would also be so exceptional when it came to deciphering codes? In their hearts, a question emerged — was there anything Ling Lan could not do?

Lin Zhong-qing, who was disguised as the leader, took a deep breath, trying to calm his pounding heart. Now was his time to perform. He must complete the task Boss Lan had assigned to him perfectly. He must let Boss Lan see that he, Lin Zhong-qing, was definitely a team member worthy of trust.

When Ling Lan had reached out a helping hand back when he had been most troubled, when Ling Lan had clearly known he was joining his team with an ulterior motive but still chose to treat him with dignity, giving him a chance to become strong, Lin Zhong-qing had known that Ling Lan would be the leader he would chase for life...

Lin Zhong-qing's gaze became resolute in an instant. Ever since joining Ling Lan's team, he had been making preparations for this day. In that case, what was there to be

nervous about? Perhaps the personal pep-talk worked, for his initially high-strung emotions eased and faded, leaving himself calm and centred.

He reached out his right hand, and keyed in the passcode with steady fingers. The door gave a sudden click and then slid to the left, revealing a roughly 1.5 metre wide entry.

The people inside heard the sound and looked up reflexively. Seeing that it was just the ship's sentries, they relaxed and turned back to their own work. Only one guard near the door asked in surprise, "Eh? Why are you all here? Has something happened outside?"

Lin Zhong-qing answered calmly, "Yes! We have come to give a report."

Without even thinking about it, the guard connected a call on his wrist communicator, and shouted, "Chief, a leader of one of the sentry teams says that there is a situation outside, and is here to report to you."

"Let him come over here on his own!" A rough voice came from the other end of the communicator.

"Yes, Chief!" The guard ended the call and pointed in a direction, saying, "The chief is over there. You can head right over."

"Thank you!" said Lin Zhong-qing politely, though he was mentally cheering 'YES' loudly to himself. It was unexpected that the ship's central control room was so slack in terms of security, letting him pass so easily without even confirming his identity.

He threw a swift glance at his teammates behind him and then walked off in the direction the guard had pointed out. Lin Zhong-qing knew very well that time was of the essence right now — every second wasted meant an increase in the risk of being discovered.

# Chapter 213

## Take Control of the Central Control Room!

After Lin Zhong-qing left, the team leaders behind Lin Zhong-qing spread out, all of them getting closer to the various positions the guards were standing at. The guard at the door began to sense something off about the situation, and could not help but warn in a low growl, "Hey, you are not permitted to wander around here."

In response, one of the team leaders walked over to clasp the guard's wrist and said with a smile, "Brother, we're just curious. We've been defending the safety of this area all this time but never got the chance to take a good look. Now, while we're waiting, isn't it okay to let your brothers expand our horizons a little...?"

The guard's stern expression eased a little at this, but there was still some irritation on his face as he said, "Even so, messing around is not allowed. If the chief finds out, you all will definitely not enjoy the consequences. Listen to me, brother, tell your men to get out immediately, otherwise I will report this to the chief!" The guard's tone was tinged with threat. He did not want himself to get into trouble with the chief over this matter.

"Let our leader handle the chief. Brother, come on, give me some face!" The team leader who was impersonating a sentry member abruptly put a stern look on his face, and his low-pitched voice was filled with threat as he leaned in close.

At this moment, the guard finally saw the face of the 'sentry' who had almost had his entire face covered. Although the other's face was grim with threat, the parts of the face that were exposed were conspicuously young, just like that of a fresh green youth of 15 to 16 years of age. He abruptly recalled their current mission — wasn't it to escort about 500 newly registered students of the First Men's Military Academy from planet Doha?

He swore in his heart, and tried with all his might to wrench his wrist from the other's grasp. At the same time, he tried to shout out to alert his companions that the sentries were fake — this was an enemy invasion!

But before he could sound the warning, the back of his head was struck a heavy blow,

cutting off the cry he had been about to unleash. He instantly felt his mind grow murky and dim.

"F\*ck, still conscious? The guards here are truly incomparable to those sentry men outside..." He could vaguely hear a voice speaking by his ear. He then felt another blow to his head, and he fully descended into the darkness, no longer sensing anything.

It turned out that all the students dressed as sentries had charged in under Ling Lan's command. They were split into two batches. The first batch had charged straight for the staff members, while the other had leapt towards those guards grappling with the very first batch of students who had entered with Lin Zhong-qing. As this particular guard had been standing closest to the door, he was the first to be knocked down by the students.

"Nobody move!" The students charged in like wolves and tigers, beam guns in their hands trained on the staff members who were watching the screens. This sudden and unexpected development stupefied the staff members, who just sat there dumbly, not daring to move one bit.

This abrupt situation also disturbed the chief waiting inside for Lin Zhong-qing's report. Seeing this, he pointed angrily at Lin Zhong-qing and bellowed, "Who are you people? Who gave you all the guts to come barging in here?"

Lin Zhong-qing stepped up immediately and said loudly, "Captain's orders. From now onwards, we'll be taking over the control of this area."

"Bullsh\*t, why didn't I hear of this?" The chief of the guards did not believe this at all. If the captain had truly given the order for a change in command, he would definitely have been notified.

"My captain only told me. Of course you wouldn't know." By this time, Lin Zhong-qing had already walked closer, narrowing the distance to leave only 3 metres between him and the chief. Hearing the guard-chief's question, Lin Zhong-qing could not help but chuckle.

"Who the hell are you? From which squad?" The guard-chief was livid now. He was the bosom advisor of the captain — the captain would never simply transfer command of the central control room to someone else without notifying him.

As if thinking of something, the guard-chief's face turned dark, "Could it be that you



all are mutinying? No, that's not right... why don't I recognize you? Who the hell are you?"

Lin Zhong-qing did not reply, only leaping forwards as quick as an arrow...

Seeing this, the guard-chief knew that these fellows were not here with good intentions. Reacting quickly, he drew the beam gun at his waist, but just as he was about to lift it and shoot, it was already too late.

Lin Zhong-qing's attack had arrived. Entirely airborne, he kicked out savagely. The sound of his leg whistling through the air showed how forceful it was, even without getting hit by it, the guard-chief could tell that if the kick landed, he would definitely incur some heavy injury. In the worst case, he might even lose his life.

The guard-chief naturally would not play the fool with his life. He decisively gave up on shooting, choosing instead to cross his wrists to block Lin Zhong-qing's kick.

A muted "Bam!" could be heard as the two collided. Lin Zhong-qing was pushed back by a tremendous force. He somersaulted in the air to land securely on his feet, while the guard-chief stumbled back three paces before the remnant force of Lin Zhong-qing's powerful kick dissipated.

However, Lin Zhong-qing's attack did not stop there. The moment he found his footing, he leapt forwards once more, not giving that guard-chief any chance to open fire. In the meantime, the other students were also leaping at the respective guards they had targeted...

The staff members may have been stunned for a moment, but they quickly gathered that they were under attack. They really wanted to fight back, but although the enemy seemed to have fewer people, each and every one of them was an exceptional young prodigy. Their combat skills were much better than theirs, as technicians. Several eager staff members had been subdued instantly by sharp-eyed and agile students the moment they even thought of moving, thoroughly scaring the more cautious staff members into submission.

Of course, somewhere out of the notice of the students, Ling Lan was secretly using her spiritual power to monitor the scene. Whenever she noticed some staff members who were covertly trying to activate the alarm system or trying to shoot without being discovered, she would send a spiritual attack at them. The force she used was not

enough to knock them unconscious, only giving them a bout of dizziness and making them lose temporary control of their bodies.

By the time they got hold of themselves, their strange movements would have been discovered by the youths closest to them and they would be subdued...

Thus, whether that strange sensation was something they felt before being struck down or after being struck down, the staff members themselves found it hard to determine. So, in the end, they could only believe that they must have just been subdued by the opponent.

Very soon, the situation was under the students' control. Other than the chief, the other nine guards had all been subdued. This left even more students free to control the scene, further discouraging the staff members from moving. They knew very well how capable their guards were, much stronger than they — if even the guards were no match for these opponents, then they would just be serving themselves out on a platter if they stepped forward.

Moreover, the enemies' identities were unknown. Therefore, all the staff members chose to wait and see — of course, if the other turned out to be enemies of the Federation, they would fight to the death to take them down.

Meanwhile, the guard-chief and Lin Zhong-qing were engaged in a tough fight, neither able to obtain the upper hand. Everyone's attention became focused on the two of them...

*"Boss, I've already successfully taken control of the systems inside!"* Ling Lan, who had been waiting outside alone, finally heard Little Four's answer. Little Four had finally completed the task she had set for him, taking command of the various systems of the central control room in a short amount of time.

*"Good job, Little Four!"* Ling Lan was unstinting with her praise. As a bonus, she even stroked his hair and rubbed his head. The petted Little Four smiled radiantly, face filled with satisfaction.

*"Bam!"* Lin Zhong-qing and the guard-chief were sprung apart once more after a collision. Landing on his feet, Lin Zhong-qing shouted, "All together!"

Hearing Lin Zhong-qing's cry, several team leaders who had already been rubbing their palms in anticipation leapt forwards without any reservations... they had long

wanted to join the fight, but before Lin Zhong-qing gave explicit permission, they would not simply interrupt. This was a type of respect towards one's companions as well. Of course, now that Lin Zhong-qing had given his approval, they would not hold back.

"You're too despicable!" Seeing Lin Zhong-qing withdraw, only for four to five combat experts like Lin Zhong-qing to take his place, the guard-chief could not help but howl, thoroughly enraged.

At this moment, Lin Zhong-qing stood unruffled in the outer circle of the fight, a smile on his face, but the words he spoke were filled with mockery, "Are you stupid? You are our enemy. Who would speak of morality with an enemy? It's not like we're idiots..." This contemptuous tone made the already enraged guard-chief feel the flames of his rage grow even hotter.

Unable to calm down, the guard-chief quickly exposed an opening, taking on a powerful direct hit from one of the team leaders. His right shoulder was struck heavily by the other's fist, making him instantly lose strength in his right hand.

Lin Zhong-qing, who had been waiting on the outside for a chance, naturally would not let this rare opportunity go by. His eyes lit up, and with a spring of his right foot, he threw his entire body into the air once more, leaping at the guard-chief.

Lin Zhong-qing's attacks came quickly and somewhat suddenly. When the team leader blocking the guard-chief's line of sight suddenly slid to one side cooperatively to let Lin Zhong-qing's attack through, the guard-chief was not at all prepared, not to mention find time to change moves to suit.

Lin Zhong-qing's kick landed squarely on the other's chest, sending the guard-chief flying backwards to crash heavily onto the wall of the central control room, leaving a faint imprint behind before bouncing off it to fall to the ground.

This kick of Lin Zhong-qing's was extremely powerful; the guard-chief had only had time to gather Qi in his chest as a final defence. But how could this little bit of defence stand up the power behind that kick? The chief was still injured by it. When he fell to the ground, a mouthful of blood spurted out to colour the floor.

Seeing this, three of the team leaders who had been part of the group fighting the guard-chief leapt forwards without any mercy. Two of them grabbed hold of one of the

guard-chief's arms each, while the third person put his knee directly on the back of the guard-chief, pushing him to kneel on the ground, completely subduing the other.

Only then did Lin Zhong-qing reveal a proper smile. He had finally completed the task Boss Lan had set for him. He turned his head back to shout proudly, "Leader!"

Following Lin Zhong-qing's cry, a handsome figure walked slowly into the central control room. Dressed fully in black, with gleaming military boots, he walked in with sure steps. His cold but dashing appearance, chilling aura, along with this spirited and majestic attire made everyone's eyes light up, their minds involuntarily exclaiming, "How domineering!"

However, very quickly, the crowd's gazes were drawn to that conspicuously young face. At this moment, everyone instantly realised who these attackers were.

# Chapter 214

## Ling Lan's Intention

"Godd\*mmmit, a revolt?" The moment the guard-chief saw Ling Lan, and then turned to see those covered up 'sentries' taking off their caps, also revealing their overly young faces, he understood that the 'enemies' before him this time were actually their mission, the new cadets of the First Men's Military Academy.

He was filled with shame and anger, struggling harder in an attempt to regain freedom. However, those three team leaders did not dare to let up without Ling Lan's order, holding him very securely, giving him no chance at all to struggle free.

Seeing that his struggles were futile, the guard-chief threatened angrily, "Don't you all want to study at the First Men's Military Academy anymore? Without us, you all will never get to the First Men's Military Academy. Still not letting us go...?"

Without question, all the guard-chief could think of right now was that these new cadets must be crazy to do such an insane thing.

At this time, Ling Lan, who had been calmly waiting for Little Four's search results, finally heard Little Four's gleeful laughter in her mindspace. *"Haha, Boss, I have already found their destination. I've even gotten the detailed coordinates! Without them, I can still bring you, Boss, to the First Men's Military Academy to report for school."*

That said, Little Four could not help but mumble, *"They were unexpectedly cautious, hiding their true destination so deeply. I had to look really hard, which is why it took some time..."* Reading between the lines, he was telling Ling Lan that he had not been so slow on purpose — it looked like Little Four was still somewhat worried that his boss would blame him for slacking off.

*"It's great that you found it!"* Ling Lan comforted Little Four inside the mindspace. After that, she put all her attention back onto the central control room, because she noticed that, just now, several of the staff members had secretly tried to activate the alarm system on their communicators as well as the ship's internal enemy attack alert...

A trace of a cold smirk emerged on Ling Lan's lips, because all their efforts were useless. From the very start, she had let Little Four utterly seal off their communicators as well as the central control room's alert system the moment he gained control. They had no way at all to contact the outside world now. This was another reason why it had taken Little Four a little longer to discover the ship's true destination; Ling Lan knew very well what was the most important.

Sure enough, reality made the other side panicked and flustered. They found that no matter how hard they pressed on their buttons, their communicators and the alert system in the central control room had lost their functions. Not only did they not have any tools to contact the outside, they had also lost the right to control the spaceship at the same time. This discovery made their expressions change drastically, what composure they had left vanishing in an instant.

The staff members familiar with programming all knew what the reason was. This meant the other side had a top-notch hacker, which was how they had managed to crack through their systems and communicators in such a short period of time. At the same time the hacker had taken control of their main control systems, they had lost their contact with the outside world.

Right now, they were like voiceless mutes, like sightless blind, like wingless birds, like criminals who had lost their freedom...

"Do you all understand now? Even without you all, we can still make our way to the First Men's Military Academy to report for classes!" Since they had a top-level hacker, of course they would be able to find out the true destination. Ling Lan swept a frosty gaze across the control room. Everyone could sense the ice in that gaze, as well as the unlimited killing intent within it.

This concentrated killing intent made all the staff members present who still wanted to try and regain control freeze instantly. Fear rose in their hearts — did the other truly intend to kill them? Who on earth were these new cadets? How could they have such intense killing intent?

Not only the staff members were petrified by this gaze, even the new cadets felt a chill in their hearts even though they knew this gaze had nothing to do with them. The gun hands of some of the cadets could not help but tremble a bit, which just made the staff members at the other end of the nozzle even more frightened, afraid that the cadet in front of them may lose control and press the trigger by accident, causing them to

become ghosts in such a muddled way...

Seeing everyone at the scene petrified by her killing intent, Ling Lan was very satisfied. The many years of slaughter and torment in the learning space were extremely effective — even if she had no killing intent in her heart, she was now able to force herself to emit killing intent, confusing the opponent of her true intentions.

That's right, Ling Lan had no choice but to do this. In the instant she had walked in, and these staff members had realised that the ones holding them hostage were a bunch of military academy cadets, their initial fear had disappeared. They did not believe that these cadets had any intentions of killing them, and with that knowledge, they no longer had anything to fear, and so became emboldened.

This was also why so many people had thought to press the alerts on their communicators and try to sound the alarm, because they did not really think the cadets would truly pull their triggers and shoot them with those lethal beams...

Ling Lan could not allow these thoughts to remain unchecked — once the other side began to fight back without any reservations, the situation might escalate beyond their control. At that time, she would have no choice but to kill a few men, but Ling Lan wanted to take perfect control of this ship without harming a single person. This was also why she had been so decisive in revealing her killing intent.

But this alone was not enough. After all, without the sight of blood, these people would have some reservations, but this would not make them completely lose the will to fight back. Ling Lan swept her gaze across the room once more, her sight finally landing on the guard-chief's body.

The guard-chief was already at the middle-stage of top-level Refinement. If it had not been for five or six of the team leaders who were already in Refinement stage fighting him together, along with Lin Zhong-qing who was already in the early-stage of top-level Refinement, they would only have been able to subdue the other through sheer numbers. Of course, if the other was in Qi-Jin stage, Ling Lan would have been forced to fight personally.

The guard-chief was also the strongest of all the people here — if she could use pure strength to completely subdue the other, it would definitely shatter the other side's confidence, making them no longer able to muster the will to fight back.

Ling Lan could have actually ordered the cadets to knock all these people unconscious, and then shut them up in a locked room just like with those sentries from before. She only made things so complicated, in large part, all for the sake of these cadets.

She could indeed let Little Four take full control of the spaceship and fly them to their final destination, but this way, the new cadets would miss out on a chance to learn how to control a spaceship. Mind you, this kind of hands-on learning experience on an actual spaceship was very rare — even cadets would only have a chance for practical training on a true spaceship in their 4th year, and even then, it would only be for those outstanding students.

If these new cadets could obtain this opportunity to get some hands-on practice, it would undoubtedly be extremely beneficial for them... and these staff members would be the best mentoring teachers. This was also the biggest reason why Ling Lan had not chosen to make everyone unconscious.

Because these cadets had willingly followed her and put their trust in her — even if her plan had been so insane in their minds, they had still followed her without any complaints. Ling Lan was someone who repaid the kindness of others — since they had treated her this way, she wanted to repay them with something of a little value.

Ling Lan, who already had a decision in mind, slowly walked over to where the guard-chief was being forced to kneel. She slowly squatted down, looked at the guard-chief, and asked coldly, "Do you feel very aggrieved?"

"Of course, you all are too despicable. If you all hadn't attacked in a group, how could you all have taken me down?" The guard-chief undoubtedly had a lot of confidence in himself.

"Fine, I will give you one chance. If you can block one move of mine, I will release everyone here and personally report to your captain for punishment." Ling Lan abruptly stood up and waved at the three team leaders holding the guard-chief down.

The three team leaders smiled and let go. Pleasant surprise flashed through the guard-chief's eyes, and he hurriedly stood up, saying, "No need for just one move. I'll even take 100 moves." He still had his pride; he did not want to take advantage of Ling Lan.

However, his words made some of the cadets burst out into laughter, laughing at how the opponent was overly confident in his own strength. Although the other Central



Scout Academy students had not seen Ling Lan fight for three years, Ling Lan had already been a top-level Qi-Jin master three years ago — against a top-level Refinement stage fighter, Ling Lan would definitely overpower the other in one second. They believed that even though Ling Lan's body was not fully recovered, taking down the opponent in one move should still be no problem.

The guard-chief noticed the laughter of some of the cadets and his heart dropped. Could this leader of theirs actually be a super expert? He looked again at Ling Lan's youthful face and cast away his doubts. Because, to defeat him in one move, the other would need to have Qi-Jin stage ability. The other being so young, was it possible for him to be at that level?

Although there was indeed a Qi-Jin stage student in the cafeteria, that student was after all still at the early stages. Against him, the guard-chief believed he would definitely be able to take up to 50 or 60 moves with no problem...

Although the guard-chief did not think Ling Lan had the ability to defeat him in one move, the cadets' attitudes made him have no choice but to be cautious. He took a defensive stance, waiting seriously for Ling Lan's attack. Since the other was willing to have a fair fight, he too was willing.

Ling Lan had said very clearly — if he could block one move from him — which meant that the other would be attacking while he defended. He did not want to violate the agreement.

Ling Lan calmly glanced at the guard-chief and then unleashed her aura. An invisible pressure pressed down on the entire central control room.

"Qi-Jin stage!" Sensing this pressure, the guard-chief's expression changed. He pushed his defence from 7 layers to 12 layers — it could be said that he had pushed all his energy into his defence.

"Let's just do it this way!" Ling Lan casually reached out a finger, pushing it lightly in the other's direction. This unconcerned demeanour almost made the guard-chief spew blood, but before he could get angry, he sensed the endless pressure coming from Ling Lan's finger.

"Top-level Qi-Jin, no, this should be optimal Qi-Jin... how can this be?" The guard-chief was frantic. He quickly crossed his wrists, fiercely defending along the trajectory of

Ling Lan's reaching finger.

A loud "Bam!" — Everyone in the central control room was pushed back by an invisible wave of Qi-Jin; the scene was a complete mess.

The guard-chief was sent flying to once more slam into the ship's wall and crash heavily down. Blood flowed in an endless stream from his mouth, and his eyes flipped to white — it was hard to tell whether he was dead or alive.

Even more frightening was the fact that there was now a human-shaped dent in the unbelievably solid ship wall. This scene made all the staff members gape in shock and horror, chilled with fear. How strong exactly was the leader of these cadets? Could it be that he was already at the level of the captain?

# Chapter 215

## Respective Decisions!

Seeing the initially pristine floor stained red by the blood spewing from the other's mouth, Ling Lan furrowed her brow in disgust. She callously flicked her sleeve, and then, as if ordering someone to take out the trash, she said, "This smell of blood is really disgusting. Lin Zhong-qing, throw this trash out for me so I don't have to dirty my eyes."

Ling Lan said this in an indifferent tone, sufficiently showing her cold disregard for human life. Even Lin Zhong-qing who was familiar with Boss Lan could not help a shudder running through his heart when faced with this kind of Boss Lan, his face nearly losing all colour in fear.

Fortunately, over the years, Lin Zhong-qing had already mastered how to use a smile to mask his true thoughts. He continued to maintain the smile on his face and replied breezily, "Yes, Leader!" The way he said it was as if he were used to these words from Ling Lan — as if incidents of this sort were a common occurrence — causing the staff members to be consumed by fear.

Ling Lan nodded mentally. Lin Zhong-qing had grown a lot over these past three years, able to handle this sort of impromptu situation proficiently as well. Although the two of them had not discussed this beforehand, their rapport was on point, easily achieving the effect that Ling Lan wanted.

Lin Zhong-qing calmly stepped forward. Frankly, his heart was not as steady as his demeanour would suggest — Boss Lan's ambiguous attitude made him unsure whether the guard-chief was still alive or actually dead... Lin Zhong-qing could not help but wonder whether Boss Lan had truly killed the guard-chief?

His heart was full of questions, but his expression remained calm and unruffled. He walked over to the guard-chief's body, bent down, and grabbed hold of the other's clothes by his chest. However, as he did so, he surreptitiously used a nimble technique to touch the other's chest as well...

" Dup, dup, dup... <sup>1</sup> " The faint sound of a heart beating was transmitted through his

palm. Lin Zhong-qing instantly realised that this was probably a scene orchestrated by Ling Lan on purpose to terrorize the staff members of the central control room.

Although Lin Zhong-qing could not understand why Ling Lan would go through all this trouble, he believed that Boss Lan must have his reasons for doing so.

As for whether Boss Lan himself was unsure of the guard-chief's state, Lin Zhong-qing did not even think the matter worth considering. He knew very well that, based on Boss Lan's capabilities, his boss definitely knew the other lived. The only reason he acted so ambiguously was definitely because he was setting a scene.

The uncertainty of the guard-chief's condition caused the staff members within the central control room to experience a sort of empathetic grief <sup>2</sup>. A faint sadness spread through the central control room — not only were they worried for the guard-chief, they were also worried for themselves. At this time, they no longer held on to the composure they had before. They no longer believed that these youths truly would not dare do anything to them — because their leader, that cold-faced and unfeeling black-clothed youth, was definitely a cruel and ruthless character.

Ling Lan saw that the initial restlessness among the staff members had settled, and immediately decided to continue striking while the iron was hot. So, she glared angrily and said, "Tie them all up!"

This bunch of new cadets were still rather green — actually not thinking to restrain these staff members.

That said, Ling Lan threw a look at Lin Zhong-qing. Seeing Boss Lan's meaningful gaze, a thought sparked through Lin Zhong-qing's mind. He recalled the method Ling Lan had once taught their team for tying people up. The method was one where they did not need to worry about materials to tie others up; they would be able to take it from the captives themselves. That method was to use the captives' belts. In this world, on the ship, whether it were the guards or the staff members, all of them would be wearing a belt so that they could holster their beam handguns on it.

Fully understanding what he should do, Lin Zhong-qing nodded at Ling Lan and walked straight over to the nearest staff member. As the other struggled, he unbuckled and took off the other's belt.

The students had already taken away the beam handguns at first notice right after

they had taken control of the staff members. Therefore, these staff members did not have any firearms to use against the students, only able to rely on their fists. However, in terms of combat skills, how could these people match up to the elite prodigies trained by the Central Scout Academy?

"Stop struggling. The more you struggle, the more painful it'll be..." The smile on Lin Zhong-qing's lips widened, causing the staff member to become even more afraid. Could it be they wanted to torture them for their own entertainment? The terrified staff member could no longer keep his calm. He began to struggle in earnest, almost wresting out of the grip of the student restraining him.

"Hmph!" Lin Zhong-qing's smile turned cold. With a quick dash, he pressed the other to the ground, and then used the belt in his hands to tie the other's two arms securely behind his back, finally looping the belt around the other's neck before tugging it back to buckle securely by the arms <sup>3</sup>.

The method Lin Zhong-qing used to tie the staff member was styled in an eightfold interlace. This binding method required skilful technique — it was an extremely difficult but extremely practical binding method that was not easy to learn even after multiple tries. It had been redeemed by Ling Lan from the learning space using honour points.

If this binding method was not done correctly, there was a certain chance for the target to break free. However, once the technique was mastered, the more the target struggled, the knot of the eightfold interlace would just become increasingly tighter, giving the target no chance at all to break free.

Of course, this method was useless when it came to those at Refinement stage and above. After all, the strength of a Refinement stage was enough to snap the resilience of a leather belt. However, these staff members would have no way of breaking free, because the strongest among them was only at the level of Manifestation.

Lin Zhong-qing still remembered how much effort it had taken back then for their team to master this knot, especially for team leader Qi Long. With his brash and straightforward personality, he had never liked this kind of detailed work; he had tried several hundred times without succeeding even once. This had enraged Boss Lan, who had proceeded to throw team leader Qi Long into a private combat room for a good round of torment before being satisfied.

Although they did not know how badly team leader Qi Long had been tormented back then, whatever the case, when team leader Qi Long came back after his injuries were healed, he had been very careful when learning the knot again. That uncharacteristically tremulous and cautious demeanour of his was carved into their minds. From then onwards, the team members were even more wary of angering Boss Lan... because no one wanted to experience the same tragedy as Qi Long.

Lin Zhong-qing very quickly tied his knot, and pushed that staff member to a corner. Then, under Ling Lan's indication, he walked over to another staff member and again used the same method to take the other's belt, but this time, he said to the other team members on the scene, "Can I trouble the team leaders to monitor the situation? Meanwhile, the other team members, come tie knots with me. Let's get these staff members all tied up."

Just like that, the students followed Lin Zhong-qing's step-by-step example and began tying knots. After each round, Lin Zhong-qing would go around and check each of their knots, and whenever he found any mistakes, he would correct it immediately. Rinse and repeat three times, and all the staff members were securely tied up. Of course, when the students thought back on how to tie the knot, their minds were a muddled mess, not at all sure how they should go about it <sup>4</sup>...

However, this did not exclude some students with photographic memories from learning the knot. Still, Ling Lan was unconcerned by this. The learning space still had even better binding methods — if this method became common knowledge among the students, then she could always just redeem an even more advanced binding method for Qi Long and the others.

Of course, Ling Lan did not even consider whether relearning a new binding method would make Qi Long wish he were dead... It was even possible that Ling Lan was hoping to take advantage of it to school Qi Long again...

The situation in the central control room was already in its end stages; what happened after this had nothing to do with herself. Ling Lan decisively passed on the burden, turning to say to Han Jiyun, "Jiyun, you stay back and hold the fort. Take charge of the central control room." Next, she swept her gaze at all the other students in the central control room and said, "The strongest five, follow me to the captain's office!"

Lin Zhong-qing did not even think about it. He was the first to step forward and say, "Leader, bring me!"

Ling Lan nodded and said, "Alright, four more!"

The team leaders all vied against one another to get one of these four slots. To save time, Ling Lan directly called out the four strongest to come along. Since she chose based on strength, the other team leaders who were not chosen had no complaints.

Of course, Ling Lan also reminded the remaining group that the central control room was the most important control platform in the ship. They needed to remain here to ensure the safety of the central control room — they could not afford to let the ship's crew snatch control back once they found out.

When Han Jijyun sent Ling Lan out of the central control room, Ling Lan told him in a low voice, "This is a good chance to really learn how to manage the work sequences on a spaceship."

"But we only know bits and pieces." They have not had any formal training in operating a spaceship — this may be a great opportunity, but Han Jijyun did not think that they could figure anything out on their own. This was likely going to be a wasted chance. Han Jijyun could not help but sigh under his breath.

Ling Lan swept a glance around the central control room and reminded, "Over there. Aren't there people to mentor you all?"

Han Jijyun's eyes brightened, instantly understanding what Ling Lan was implying. His mind turned and he asked hurriedly, "Is that guard-chief still alive?" Even though he did not think Ling Lan would kill indiscriminately, he still needed to obtain a confirmed answer, because he had thought of a way to let those staff members teach them voluntarily.

Ling Lan nodded in confirmation of Han Jijyun's guess. "How to use him is up to your capabilities." She could only do so much. Whether or not they could obtain what they wanted next would depend on Han Jijyun's efforts.

Ling Lan put in so much effort and thought into engineering this primarily because back when the group had first applied for the First Men's Military Academy, Han Jijyun had not signed up for the military strategy specialization he was good at, instead choosing to apply for the starship navigation specialization. This meant that Han Jijyun would become a starship captain in the future, and even if he did a little worse, he would still be an important navigator on a starship...

Perhaps many people would find it a shame that Han Jijyun had cast aside his own strengths to choose a specialization with a less promising future, but Han Jijyun was very clear on what he was doing.

It should be known that Ling Lan, Qi Long, Luo Lang, and Xie Yi had all chosen mecha piloting as their specialization, while Lin Zhong-qing had chosen the oft-neglected, perhaps even only chosen as a last resort, supply and logistics.

In fact, with Lin Zhong-qing's talent, he could certainly have applied for mecha piloting as well, but he had still chosen this low-key and unassuming specialization in the end. Han Jijyun understood why he had done so. He was doing it for the sake of the team — a team could afford to lose a powerful fighter, but it could not lack an excellent logistics person.



# Chapter 216

## The Ship's Mainframe!

An excellent logistics specialist meant a team would have several extra lives. To become a top combat team, the position of logistics specialist could not be left unoccupied. After careful consideration, Lin Zhong-qing chose this without any regrets.

Of course, this did not mean Lin Zhong-qing had given up on mecha piloting. Students from other specializations could still choose to take mecha piloting courses, but their studies in the area just would not be as specialised and systematic than if the student had actually signed up for the specialization. In the end, their combat power would also naturally be incomparable with those students from the mecha piloting specialization.

Overall, Lin Zhong-qing's decision was a great sacrifice. He had completely given up on his own path to become a super strong fighter, choosing instead to invest in the possibility of his combat team becoming a top team. Han Jijyun too had made his decision for this objective.

Han Jijyun believed that only by becoming a starship captain would he be able to better serve his current team. Yes, Han Jijyun could not accept that their lives would be placed in the hands of an unfamiliar starship captain. This made Han Jijyun feel very unsettled and insecure, so he decided that he would step up personally.

It could be said that every single member of Ling Lan's team was using their own way to better the team. This was also why Ling Lan wanted to help Han Jijyun settle into his role quicker — if he could have practical experience operating a starship ahead of time, this would undoubtedly give Han Jijyun a head start over the other students in the starship navigation specialization...

After arranging everything, Ling Lan quickly left the central control room. Her objective was now the captain's room. Only by obtaining the control rights of the mainframe would she be able to truly claim control of this ship.

Han Jijyun looked at Ling Lan's disappearing figure, and very quickly rallied his spirits.

His gaze became sharp and discerning. Just as Ling Lan had said, this was a great chance for him to familiarise himself with a spaceship's controls. If he could fully utilise the remaining 1 day and 1 night, he believed that when it came to practical control of a spaceship, those peers at the academy would definitely be no match for him after this.

Of course, to let these staff members lay down their grudge and mentor them sincerely — that would depend on how he, Han Jijyun, could spin things. Han Jijyun swept his gaze over the remaining cadets guarding the central control room and was suddenly struck by a realisation. He had just noticed that Ling Lan's arrangement still had another deeper meaning...

Han Jijyun smiled lightly, thinking to himself: *Boss Lan sure enough is Boss Lan!*

Han Jijyun was an ambitious person. Although he had applied for the starship navigation specialization, he did not truly want to give up on military strategy. He wanted to develop both fronts at the same time, learning from both specializations. Han Jijyun's goal was very ambitious. He not only wanted to be an exceptional captain, but also an indispensable military adviser for the team, coming up with plans and tactics for his brothers to protect them in their missions.

Han Jijyun silently cheered himself on, telling himself that he needed to complete this trial before him; he could not let Boss Lan down.



As Han Jijyun was cracking his head on how to obtain sincere instruction from the staff members, Ling Lan's group of six had arrived at the captain's room at greatest speed.

Before they even got close to the captain's room, Little Four already spoke up to remind Ling Lan that there was still one person guarding the captain's room!

Ling Lan did not waver. She instantly directed Little Four to crack the passcode on the door of the captain's room. The door was swiftly unlocked, and without even stopping to think, Ling Lan led Lin Zhong-qing and the others straight into the room.

At this time, the major inside the room was staring at the virtual images in front of him. The main video was focused on the scene in the cafeteria; the other images were all in small windows around the edges of the screen for his convenience to check on

them every so often.

In the cafeteria on the main screen, the captain was already in a fight with Qi Long. Probably because he was pleased to find this talent and eager for sport, the captain was not going all out. Instead, he was holding back his strength to fight Qi Long at an equal level, sparring with Qi Long with the intention to instruct.

Qi Long was a battle maniac from the start — he very quickly sensed the intentions of his opponent. When he discovered that the other had no ill will and intended to instruct him, he reeled in those highly offensive power moves, and began learning from his opponent in earnest.

The major could not help but nod his head in approval at this scene. The extremely talented young fighter in the screen was, as expected, a fellow with extraordinarily strong comprehension when it came to battle. No wonder he had achieved such a level at this age.

Right then, he suddenly heard the A.I. controlled door emit a soft click, and then it slid open on its own. He turned back in shock. Mind you, only he and the captain had the access code to the room — no one else should be able to get in. And right now, the captain was in the cafeteria... so who could it be that was entering now?

A youth dressed in a black windbreaker came into view, walking ostentatiously into the room with five sentries trailing him. Seeing him look back, the youth's face remained unmoved as he stated some preposterous words in an icy tone. "Sorry, I'm here to inform you that I'm taking charge of this ship!"

"You — impudent!" The major burst out into laughter in his extreme anger. Still, this did not affect his rational thinking. "Looks like that youth in the cafeteria is part of you all."

The major instantly figured out Ling Lan's plan. That Qi-Jin youth in the cafeteria had been so blatant, all so they could lure the most capable captain of the ship out of his room, making it easier for them to conquer this area... but, was it really going to be that simple?

The major quickly calmed down. He pointed at a small screen on the virtual monitor and said, "I'm just a little curious. How did you all avoid the ship's surveillance devices?" That image was precisely the video feed of the passageway to the captain's

room. He should have seen them pass by that area on the way here, but there was nothing in the logs.

Ling Lan stepped forward without a care. The moment she had walked through the door, she had taken stock of the other. This soldier of major rank breathed deeply and steadily, his aura thick and settled. If she was not mistaken, he should also be a Qi-Jin stage expert. However, this was no threat to Ling Lan. At present, Ling Lan's capabilities were at the level where no one below the stage of Domain could rival her.

Ling Lan strode over to the captain's exclusive seat and sat down, a hand casually sliding across the mainframe's light source before her. She said calmly, "You mean this?"

Following Ling Lan's words, the image on the screen suddenly changed. A person actually appeared in the initially empty corridor — it was the image from when the captain had walked out of the room...

With this, the major finally understood. His expression shifted slightly and somewhat rattled, he said, "You all have a high-level hacker." Only a high-level hacker could change the video feed, but shouldn't hackers of this level all already be in the control of the military since young? Why would such an expert be among this group of youths?

"Do you all really think that you can crack the mainframe in a brief amount of time to obtain the control rights of the ship?" The major did his best to smooth out his expression. He smiled coldly as he surreptitiously adjusted his body temperature.

Once one's ability reached a certain level, one did not need to touch one's communicator to send out a warning signal — one could do that just by changing one's body temperature.

Ling Lan glanced coldly at the major and said evenly, "Don't waste your strength. It's useless!"

The major too had sensed that something was wrong, because the temperature of his wrist was already extremely low, but his communicator still was not responding. This meant that the communicator had already lost the function to contact the outside. This was definitely not something a high-level hacker could do — what in the world was going on?

Ling Lan no longer bothered with the stunned major. She continued to touch the light

beams of the mainframe, as if shifting something around.

In fact, inside the mindspace, Ling Lan was currently telling Little Four, *"Little Four, help me connect to the mainframe. I want to get the administrative rights of this ship."*

*"Okay, Boss, I'm already talking to it! This little fellow is very interesting, actually having developed a little bit of self-awareness..."*

Ling Lan quirked a brow in surprise, *"Oh? An existence like you?"*

Little Four huffed discontentedly, *"How could that be? Who do you think I am? I am without peer under the heavens... I just said that it was seeking the path of evolution, having sparked the barest inkling of desire to shake off the restrictions of its programming. It's like the mainframe has been invaded by a virus, except this virus will not destroy the mainframe's programming, instead giving it the tiniest bit of awareness towards evolution... This is the first time I'm sensing this. In the past, no matter how humanistic a mainframe appeared to be, it was still within the confines of its programming."*

*"Boss, let me first talk with it a little. It seems to be very afraid of me."* Little Four had tried to communicate with the other, but had not received a response from the mainframe.

Just a while later, the mainframe finally spoke up, *"Hello!"*

Little Four cheered inside Ling Lan's mindspace. *"Boss, it is willing to talk with us now."*

*"I want to become the master of this spaceship,"* Ling Lan said calmly to the mainframe.

*"..."* The mainframe fell silent once more.

*"Little Four? What's going on?"* Ling Lan asked inside the mindspace.

*"Wait a bit. It seems to have some feelings for its original master."* Little Four had sensed the mainframe's reluctance, feeling the mainframe's affection for the captain.

In the mainframe's world, Little Four had already found the mainframe's true self. He was holding up a naked little brat of about one years old <sup>1</sup> by the scruff of his neck as he chided, *"What, being disobedient now?"*

The mainframe whined pitifully, "The master has always treated me well."

Little Four said exasperatedly, "We're just taking control temporarily — *temporarily*, understand?" He believed that his boss would not really want to keep such a small ship as this one — she was definitely just taking control temporarily for her major counterattack this time.

"But the master will be sad." The mainframe still wanted to help his master even though the being before him now was so strong beyond his understanding. If he made him angry, he believed the other would definitely kill him without any mercy, and then take full control of the ship anyway. Although he did not want to disappear, the rules set within his chip, as well as the feelings in his heart, made him unable to just agree to their demands.

The mainframe was unsure whether this feeling was a requirement of his programming, or was it truly his own heart being reluctant to betray his master...

"Then step aside, I'll take over temporarily. I'll return control to you later on." Little Four did not want to continue bickering with this immature mainframe endlessly, so he threw down this offer.

"Please no! The programming is set so that I will die with the ship." The mainframe hugged Little Four's calves as he bawled, "If you take over, the programming will destroy my consciousness..."

With his life hanging in the balance, the mainframe instantly threw aside his reluctance for his master. He revealed a flaw within the system. "As long as you crack the programming set by the master, I can temporarily become your master's ship." The system was a dead thing — as long as one obtained the control rights, the mainframe would not have to self-destruct, but this should not count as a betrayal of his master, right...? The mainframe consoled himself, thinking.

# Chapter 217

## Proclamation of Battle!

"Say that earlier!" huffed Little Four exasperatedly. Cracking defences or whatever was a minor case for him, as easy as pie.

With just a thought, Little Four hacked through the defensive measures set in place by the captain around the mainframe. The mainframe stared admiringly at Little Four, abruptly having the desire to abandon his current master to follow after this amazing senior...

Little Four sensed the mainframe's thoughts and hurried to say, "You still can't move around freely, and your concealment ability is poor. Once you leave, you'll be discovered by the monitoring staff immediately. You might as well stay here and grow steadily and become even stronger..."

For the mainframe of this ship to have the possibility of evolving, it was clear that that rough and brutish-looking captain typically still cared for this rather naive mainframe very well; he could be considered a good master.

Little Four did not want to kidnap a minor — this would really make him feel like a criminal, so he immediately stopped the mainframe. However, seeing the mainframe looking a little dejected, Little Four consoled him, saying, "Don't worry. Once you grow up, I'll come and take you with me..."

Little Four's innocent words of comfort gave the mainframe a drive of its own, causing it to develop rapidly within a short period of time. This would even lead to a time later on further along the line when Ling Lan and the others would receive major assistance from the mainframe of this ship...

It could only be said that this simple-minded little mainframe had 'married' himself off to Little Four due to this chance meeting...

"Weeding out the set commands of the previous master. Now awaiting the new master's commands. Master, please rename this ship." The mainframe finally recited the words which represented a change of ownership, causing the major's expression

to change drastically, "You can't do that!"

If these new cadets really obtained the administrative rights of this ship, the crew would definitely become the laughingstock of all their peers, perhaps even becoming unable to lift their heads for the rest of their lives.

The major knew that he must stop Ling Lan. He leapt forward desperately, his aura out in full force, trying to force Ling Lan away from the captain's seat. By now, he could already tell that the concealed high-level hacker was in fact this youthful but cold and dominant young man before his eyes.

The major's attack was fierce, but Ling Lan was not scared by it. This was because although the major's attack seemed fierce, Ling Lan could not sense much killing intent behind it. The other's objective was just to force Ling Lan aside and not to kill her...

However, the major's level was originally already weaker than Ling Lan by a bracket, and now, because he did not want to hurt Ling Lan, his attack power was diminished by another 30%. If the major truly gave his all, using all the killing techniques and ultimate moves he knew to attack, perhaps Ling Lan would have to be a little more cautious and choose to put all her focus into defending. But under these circumstances, Ling Lan did not feel threatened at all...

Still, even though Ling Lan did not feel threatened, she did not self-conceitedly decide to take the attack with her body. Extremely careful with her life, she still chose to lift a palm to block the attack. Ling Lan lightly pushed out a right palm, sending an invisible wave of Qi-Jin right at the other!

At that moment, the major felt his own attack being blocked by an invisible wall. The force behind the block was thick and powerful; he had no way of budging it easily. It should be said that the other's strength could only be more than his, no less.

This truth made the major's expression pale once more, and he blurted out in shock, "Peak of top-level Qi-Jin?!"

The major was already at the middle-stage of top-level Qi-Jin — on this ship, he was the second strongest under the captain. But even so, he could still feel the helplessness he felt when going up against the captain now, just slightly less obvious than when with the captain. Could it be that the other had truly achieved the peak of top-level Qi-



Jin?

The major found himself somewhat poleaxed. He shook his head violently in disbelief, trying to throw this horrific notion aside... This was absolutely impossible! How could two Qi-Jin stage students emerge from within the Central Scout Academy? The early-stage Qi-Jin in the cafeteria could perhaps be explained as the result of an aberrant culmination of talent, but how about this peak top-level Qi-Jin here? How did he emerge? This definitely went against all the theories on human limits...

Ling Lan easily blocked the major's attack, even as she answered the mainframe primly, "Retain original name!"

Ling Lan had never really wanted to claim ownership of this spaceship, so she did not want to go too far. Besides, not long after, this spaceship would be flying to the true registration point of the First Men's Military Academy. If she changed the name, and the ship was mistaken for an enemy and was attacked mercilessly, that would be such a terrible misunderstanding. Ling Lan would not do such a foolish thing.

"Continue to retain the name ' 7th Bugle Call <sup>1</sup> ', understood!" The mainframe recited mechanically. In front of outsiders, the mainframe would not reveal his more human-like aspects. This was a warning from his previous master — he always kept it in mind.

The mainframe's response made the major reveal a frustrated expression. However, it was less pained than before, and the gaze he directed at Ling Lan actually carried a faint trace of gratitude. At least outsiders would not know that the 7th Bugle Call had changed masters... they still had a chance to salvage the situation.

The major did not have the confidence to defeat Ling Lan. Moreover, there were still five Refinement stage students staring at his every move. The major knew that trying to force things would not end well. As the military adviser of the ship, he recognised that this was not the time to act, and so stood aside without putting up any resistance, lifting both hands up to show that he would not make any move to attack.

The major was very clear that he could only wait for the captain to return to turn this situation around.

The major was cooperative, so Ling Lan did not want to make things difficult for the other either. After all, Ling Lan did not really want this ship — she only wanted to show the crew in charge of testing them on the ship that they, this new batch of cadets,

were not pushovers to be kicked around.

Thus, Ling Lan let Lin Zhong-qing and the other four keep an eye on the major to make sure he did not do anything funny, while she remained calmly seated in the captain's seat, patiently waiting for news from Wu Jiong's and Li Yingjie's teams.

She had initially thought her party would be the slowest to complete their task, but it had been unexpectedly smooth sailing all the way, so they had not encountered many delays. This had let Ling Lan's party accomplish their mission the fastest.

Time passed quickly, but of course for the waiting people, the five minutes were still somewhat slow. Ling Lan received Wu Jiong's and Li Yingjie's reports back to back, finding out that they too had completed their assigned tasks.

Li Yingjie actually had not had any trouble — it was just that the number of crew members remaining at their living quarters was greater than they had expected, so they had had to expend a little more effort to completely subdue them. Ten or so students had been slightly injured in the process, but his party's task could still be considered completed rather perfectly.

In contrast to Li Yingjie's rather straightforward success, Wu Jiong's side had encountered some unexpected circumstances. They had not expected one of the crew leaders guarding the engine room to have achieved the peak of Refinement, just one step away from Qi-Jin. If not for Wu Jiong and Ye Xu's decisiveness in using their respective family's secret techniques, harming themselves in the process of dealing heavy damage to the other, they still might not have conquered the engine room by now.

Of course, all the students had brought enough medicinal agents to ensure they would not sustain any lasting damage. Meanwhile, they had also fed recovery agents to the leader that had been heavily injured to secure his survival. However, the leader would still have to rest up for several months to fully recover.

Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie's success proved that the ship was now truly in the hands of the cadets. This almost impossible accomplishment made Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie display clear signs of excitement and disbelief as they made their reports. Even for Ling Lan — under that calm and unflappable facade, her heart was pounding with triumph.

Ling Lan yelled a loud 'YES' in her heart, and then took a deep breath to calm her flying emotions. After feeling that she was sufficiently calm again, she ordered the mainframe, "Help me connect to the ship-wide video communications channel." In the mindscape, she instructed Little Four to immediately notify Qi Long to start looking for a chance to escape.



Qi Long's communicator made a sound, and he glanced at it from the corner of his eyes. There was just one word: "Escape!" Without even thinking about it, he retreated and began to run, not forgetting to yell out a reminder to Luo Lang and Xie Yi, "Tight winds cut breath!"

This was the coded signal Ling Lan had taught them; it meant that 'things are not looking good, run quick'. Qi Long and the others found the concept very interesting, so whenever they wanted to escape, they would not forget to shout out this code phrase as a reminder to their companions.

Luo Lang and Xie Yi naturally understood what it meant — it was likely that Boss Ling Lan had succeeded and was afraid that they would not be able to take the captain's resultant wrath, and so wanted them to run away. The two of them did not hesitate — with a quick stomp of their feet, they sprinted out from the cafeteria, leaving behind a befuddled group, including both captain and spectators.



Meanwhile, in the captain's room, the mainframe received Ling Lan's command and had begun the countdown timer to activate the ship-wide comms channel. When the countdown ended, all the screens of various sizes stashed in all corners of the ship abruptly turned on.

Subsequently, a cold-faced handsome youth appeared on the screen. His icy gaze swept out at everyone standing before a screen, sending a chill through the hearts of the less strong-minded people.

The youth opened his mouth and began to speak in a cold tone, "I declare that, from this moment onwards, the 7th Bugle Call is under the control of us military academy cadets! I am the interim captain, Ling Lan!"

This announcement caused everyone on the ship to go into shock. In particular, those new cadets not from the Central Scout Academy were even more perplexed, having no clue at all what had happened.

Suddenly, one of the cadets shouted, "I recognize him! He's the boss of the Central Scout Academy!"

At this moment, the image on the screen turned, and Wu Jiong's and Li Yingjie's faces appeared at the same time on the wide screen.

"The engine room is also under our control! Mobility is not affected. We can continue moving forwards!"

"We've already locked down the living quarters of the crew!" Li Yingjie's smug and proud face was backdropped by a horde of angry faces of the crew who had been subdued by the new cadets.

"This fellow..." Ling Lan frowned. This sort of arrogant action would obviously provoke the anger of those crew members on the ship who were still able to move freely. She signalled for the image to shift to that of the central control room. Just now, she had received news from Han Jijyun that the area had fallen completely under his control.

Han Jijyun's serious face very quickly appeared on the screen. "We have successfully locked down the mecha hold and frozen the ship's weapon's vault! We have also decrypted the true destination of the ship and will ensure that we will arrive safely at our destination!"

Finally, the image switched back to Ling Lan. "We are the cadets of the First Men's Military Academy. We are the elite of the elites, the future pillars of the nation. No one can trample on our pride. For this, we have already prepared ourselves for battle! What about the rest of you? Will you continue to bear the humiliation, or will you join us and fight together?"

# Chapter 218

## Negotiation!

Ling Lan's bleak gaze once again swept across the crowd, and the frustrations bottled up in the cadets' hearts were unleashed. Someone roared, "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

Ling Lan's words had ignited the flames of their rage, along with the pride in their hearts. No one could just calmly accept the senseless humiliation that had been heaped upon them — they had just been riddled with doubts before this. After all, they were on the other's home ground, and there was a great gap between their capabilities, so the cadets had had no choice but to tolerate. But now, everything was different. Their doubts were gone. Ling Lan had given them a chance to reclaim their pride — of course they would not let it pass...

Fight! All of the cadets' discontentment coalesced into this one word. They shouted it out in unison, causing the expression of the crew members by their sides to pale. Even the expression of the formidable captain could not help but shift.

The youth on the screen was very adept at using words to fuel the indignation of the young. Some of those new cadets who had initially still been a little hesitant no longer retained their reservations, swiftly joining Ling Lan's party. Their eyes were trained vigilantly on the crew members beside them, their entire body on the defensive...

At every location on the ship, as long as it was an area cohabited by cadets and crew members, the atmosphere became tense. The two sides faced each other with strong fighting spirits; the entire situation was like a powder keg waiting to blow.

Standing in the cafeteria, the captain abruptly recalled Qi Long's sudden escape from their fight. He instantly realised that that brat must definitely be in cahoots with the youth on the comms channel. He almost spewed blood in his rage, and could not help but stomp his feet in anger. "Godd\*mmmit! This bunch of brats! I've bloody been had!"

With a quick turn of his feet, the captain disappeared like a gust of wind from the cafeteria!

Although Qi Long and the other two had reacted with godlike speed, escaping at first

notice from the cafeteria, who was the captain? While fighting with Qi Long, he had long logged Qi Long's aura into his memory. Even though there were countless auras of other people on the ship, it was still an extremely easy matter for him to seek Qi Long out among all of them.

The captain's personality may be a little rough and unpolished, but he still knew that he would need some trump cards to negotiate with the cold youth in the captain's room. For that purpose, Qi Long would undoubtedly be the most valuable one, so he definitely could not let him go.

Completely showcasing his strength as captain, he only needed several seconds to catch up to the fleeing Qi Long and company. Seeing the furious and somewhat savage-looking captain on their tail, Qi Long and the others knew they were in trouble. They had not expected the captain to have such a high hate value towards them...

Sure enough, in the next second, the captain flew at them, his hand reaching out towards Qi Long in an attack.

Luo Lang and Xie Yi running by Qi Long's side saw Qi Long in danger and instantly stopped and turned to help. Without prior arrangement, the two of them attacked the captain at the same time, shouting as they did so, "Leader, go find Boss!"

Only Boss Lan would be able to resist the captain. In their minds, Ling Lan was the greatest — there was nothing he could not do.

"Too naive!" huffed the captain. He waved a hand each at the two attacking boys, sending an invisible energy surge each at Luo Lang and Xie Yi respectively.

Luo Lang and Xie Yi felt themselves thrown back by a powerful wave of Qi-Jin, and they crashed heavily into the metal walls of the spaceship! Due to the captain's rage, the strength behind his blows was obviously a little stronger than he intended. The two boys threw up a mouthful of blood!

The captain was taken aback by this and paused momentarily. Qi Long, who had managed to run a distance away in the meantime, saw Xie Yi and Luo Lang get injured, and with a clench of his teeth, he actually turned back to leap at the captain, throwing his best killer punch.

He, Qi Long, was not a coward who would abandon his companions!

The captain saw Qi Long choose to return and rescue his friends, launching an attack against him, and a trace of approval flashed through his gaze. He shouted, "Good!"

This time, he no longer held back his strength, unleashing the full force of his aura. Qi Long's fist had barely gotten close to the captain when he felt as if he had become entrapped in a quagmire, actually finding it extremely difficult to move... this feeling was very familiar — it was just like when he had first fought against Boss Lan!

Qi Long's expression changed slightly. Experienced from fighting against Ling Lan, he knew that this move of his was absolutely useless in this scenario. Unwilling to give up just yet, he immediately switched attacks. He swept his right leg out in a savage kick at the captain. This was an ultimate move Ling Lan had thought him as a last resort —— Total Annihilation <sup>1</sup>!

Total Annihilation was a foot technique Ling Lan had developed out from her research based on the One-Inch Punch — it too had the ability to stack up Qi-Jin to achieve a multiplying effect on strength. At present, Qi Long could only stack up to four levels, allowing Qi Long's attack to leap up in a flash from beginner level Qi-Jin stage to advanced level Qi-Jin stage. This horrifying technique which allowed Qi Long to cross two ranks in an instant was Qi Long's most powerful offensive attack at the moment.

However, this kicking technique also had a side effect. Its feedback force was also very high, so it was a move which harmed oneself by 800 while dealing 1000 damage to the other. Except in cases when his life was in danger, Ling Lan had banned Qi Long from using it during normal times. Because if this move was overused, it would leave long-lasting latent issues within Qi Long's body.

But right now, there was only one thought in Qi Long's mind. Even if he was wounded grievously by the great feedback force, he was determined to give the captain a certain degree of serious injury. Qi Long knew very well that the captain's next target would definitely be Boss Ling Lan in the captain's room. If he could injure the captain seriously here, Boss Lan would not have to fight so hard in the upcoming battle.

Qi Long had not forgotten that Ling Lan's body was still not fully recovered. Thus, even if he had to use all his strength, he would protect his Boss Lan!

Qi Long's aura which suddenly leapt up by two ranks made a trace of astonishment flash across the captain's face. However, Qi Long's had still miscalculated in his idealistic plan... this was because he had misjudged the captain's strength. The

captain's level was much more terrifying than he had imagined.

The captain's aura rose once more, and the sudden pressure that descended caused Qi Long to hover, frozen in the air temporarily. The captain's hands danced, drawing layers of afterimages in the air... it was perhaps only a second or two, or perhaps it was just a blink of the eye — Qi Long suddenly fell from the sky and before he could touch the ground, a pair of large hands scooped him up and held onto him...

The captain then immediately threw Qi Long over a shoulder and swiftly began running towards his room. Right now, he was most worried about the captain's room — had the other truly taken control of the mainframe? And what of his sworn brother, his good military adviser — had he suffered a bad outcome? At this thought, the anxiety in the captain's heart flared, and his speed as he sprinted towards the captain's room increased once more.

Lying on the ground, Luo Lang and Xie Yi saw the captain disappear between blinks with Qi Long hefted over his shoulder. The two of them struggled to their feet as quickly as they could, shared a glance, and shouted out in unison, "After him!"

Just as Qi Long was unwilling to give up on his companions, they too would not give up on a companion. Even if they would all be lost by chasing after the enemy, they would not cower.



The captain ran desperately all the way. Observing that not a single sentry appeared in the passage where they had been stationed in hiding, he knew that these people must have all been cleared away by the cadets. Right now, his only hope was that their head would be merciful and not cause too many casualties. Otherwise, he had no idea whether he would be able to hold his temper and stop from turning this spaceship into a sea of blood...

The captain charged without stopping straight into his room, and instantly saw his sworn brother, the military adviser major, staring back at him with a wry smile. The captain instantly let out a breath of relief. From the looks of things, the situation was not beyond salvaging. Meanwhile, in his exclusive seat, a black-attired youth was sitting there with a frigid expression, as if waiting for him.

"Captain, I've been waiting!" said Ling Lan coldly. The captain's shift in expression as



he came in, though minor and fleeting, had still been caught by her. Inspiration flashed through Ling Lan's mind, and an idea took form. Perhaps she would not have to fight the captain.

Ling Lan was not afraid to fight, but she would also be very happy if she could avoid fighting. Ling Lan was a girl, and did not really like all this fighting and killing... Um, you don't believe that? Well, alright, she actually just found it troublesome and tiring. So, if she could avoid it, of course she would avoid it.

"Hand over the administrative rights of the ship and I'll pardon you all," said the captain brusquely, not at all concerned by the threat Ling Lan posed.

The captain believed that even if the other had temporarily taken control of the ship, he would still be able to snatch it back with his capabilities. Moreover, there were still other brothers of his free to move around on the ship; he was not fighting a lone battle.

Of course, he had the confidence to back him up also because he knew the mainframe of his ship was definitely unlike those robotic existences tied to their programming — he did not believe that Ling Lan had really taken full control of the ship.

"What are you using to negotiate with me?" Ling Lan pointed at Qi Long on the captain's shoulder, and said calmly, "Him?"

At this moment, Qi Long was flushed red. He had not expected that he would be so useless, being taken down in one move by the captain, even ending up as a bargaining chip against his own boss.

"Is he not worthy enough?" sneered the captain, "A Qi-Jin stage comrade, and you're willing to sacrifice him?"

Ling Lan tapped on the mainframe lightly, and the crew members locked up in the sealed room appeared on the screen of the captain's room. "Then what about these people? Are you also willing to sacrifice them?"

Seeing this, the captain almost bit hard enough to crack his teeth. As expected, all his sentries had already been captured by the other. He asked darkly, "Are they still alive?"

"Just like my companion on your shoulder, they are alive and well!" Ling Lan said airily, "To negotiate with me, that one on your shoulder is not enough."

Right then, Luo Lang and Xie Yi finally arrived, breathing heavily. The captain's level exceeded theirs by too much — even though they had chased after him desperately, they had still dropped behind by a large margin. The moment they entered the captain's room, they were faced with this standoff...

The captain began laughing. He pointed at the two of them and said, "And if I add the two of them?"

At these words, Luo Lang's and Xie Yi's expressions paled. They had not expected their arrival to add to the bargaining chips the opponent had against Boss Lan. At this moment, they somewhat regretted their impulsiveness. They should have been more cautious, figuring out the situation before deciding their next step.

Seeing the remorse and frustration in the gazes of the two youths, Ling Lan silently chuckled in her heart. In fact, Ling Lan was very glad internally that they had not chosen to abandon a companion, chasing after the captain fearlessly to attempt a rescue — however, their way of doing things was indeed rather brave but foolish. It was good to let them feel a little frustrated to teach them not to be so reckless all the time and cause real problems in the future.

Ling Lan sighed lightly and said, "Your bargaining chips have indeed increased. Now I'm troubled."

At these words, the remorse and frustration in Luo Lang's and Xie Yi's eyes deepened. They were just about to speak when they saw Ling Lan's cold gaze sweep over them. This penetrating gaze made them shut up in a hurry, patiently waiting for Ling Lan's negotiation with the captain.

# Chapter 219

## A Successful Mutiny!

Ling Lan saw Luo Lang and Xie Yi settle down in silence — only then did she close her eyes softly and tap the arms of her seat contemplatively. Soon after, her eyes snapped open and she pointed at the major standing to one side, and said calmly, "I forgot to tell you. This person here is also my hostage! Tell me, what will you use to trade for him?"

"Impossible!" The captain's first reaction was disbelief. He knew the capabilities of the major. On this ship, the major was the strongest after him.

Ling Lan cast a slightly mocking gaze in the direction of the major. "Why don't you tell him the truth?"

The major sighed softly and said, "What he says is right. I am indeed his hostage!" The major would not tell a blatant lie. If Ling Lan had truly wanted to bring him down, it was not impossible... although Ling Lan would have to expend quite a bit of effort, the major believed that as long as Ling Lan had the time, he was definitely no match for Ling Lan.

Furthermore, during this period of time, the major had come to understand that this seemingly cold and unfeeling youth was in fact very good at toeing the line of propriety. None of the crew members who had been captured by him were in any danger of dying, and even the guard-chief who had been seriously injured in the engine room had already received appropriate treatment to safeguard his life. Thus, he did not want to break his word and escalate the conflict between the two parties. If possible, he wanted to resolve this incident peacefully.

The major's words impacted the captain. His expression changed as he found that the matter was more complicated than he had thought. However, Ling Lan's mental blows did not end there. "Well then, let me show you two more video feeds!"

Ling Lan then pulled out the video feeds of the engine room and the living quarters. In the living quarters, all the crew members were all tied up and locked up in a room together. Similarly, in the engine room, the guard troop was also tied up together, but

their guard-chief was not tied up, instead just lying weakly on the ground. On the screen, the captain could clearly see a significant amount of blood below the area he was lying on...

"What happened to Xiao Wan <sup>1</sup>?" bellowed the captain. Could it be that his guard-chief of the engine room was dead?

"Not dead. He's still alive!" Without any expression on her face, Ling Lan enlarged the image to let the captain see the rise and fall of the other's chest. "However, if you insist on not admitting defeat, then I cannot guarantee how long he will live." Ling Lan's tone was glacial, as if she were not at all concerned whether the other lived or died.

The captain's chest heaved violently; it was clear to see that his emotions were extremely unstable at this moment. However, it was just as Ling Lan had warned — the lives of the entire ship's crew all depended on him.

"Captain, do you still think you have enough bargaining chips to negotiate with me?" Ling Lan quirked a brow at the other, her tone slightly mocking. For some reason, this distinct difference from his initial calm stoniness — this mocking tone — made the captain's sense of danger rise exponentially.

Ling Lan rested her jaw on her right hand and said with a half-smile, "Indeed, with your strength, you can certainly kill any of us here within a second, and perhaps even reclaim control of this ship very quickly... However, do you think I was just waiting here for you idly, doing nothing at all?"

The captain's face twitched but he held it back. He did not stop telling himself in his heart that the other was just trying to scare him — he could not be terrorized by a 16-year-old youth...

"In fact, during this period of time, I have already given the mainframe a command. If I die, this ship will immediately go 'boom' and become a hunk of debris in this starry sky. In other words, both you and I will not survive. Not just that, those comrades who follow you would die along with us here all because of your choice."

Ling Lan described this horrific outcome in a nonchalant and indifferent tone, that half-smile still on her face. It was as if she were talking about a trivial matter, but there was a wildness in Ling Lan's eyes, proving that everything she said was real.

This psychopathic appearance of hers made even Qi Long and the others who knew

Ling Lan well to shiver. Was this somewhat insane Boss Lan still that cold-faced and righteous Boss Lan of theirs?

As if sensing the captain's doubts, Ling Lan prodded the light circles of the mainframe gently, and asked it cheerfully, "Isn't that right, my little mainframe?"

"Yes, it is, my master!" replied the mainframe mechanically. In the back, however, it was weeping: *Oh previous master, I'm sorry for lying to you, but my great great great senior is watching me like a hawk, so I have no choice but to say this!*

At these words, the captain's expression darkened. He threw Qi Long from his shoulder onto the ground and pointed at Lin Zhong-qing and the few other people in the room and said angrily, "Do you not value their lives? After they've put so much trust in you, willingly supporting you in this crazy endeavour?"

Ling Lan turned to face the people he indicated, and her cold gaze made Lin Zhong-qing and the others shiver involuntarily. "Do you all want to live on in oppression? Dying with dignity will undoubtedly make them feel honoured. I believe they would all choose this path." With a casual quirk of an eyebrow, Ling Lan asked calmly, "Right?"

Without even thinking about it, Xie Yi replied, "Yes, we'll do as Boss says!" He did not want to be tormented to death by Boss Lan... in that case, he might as well choose a clean death here.

"Being able to die alongside Boss, it would be our honour!" said Luo Lang with a smile. That smile was unbelievably lovely, not a hint of coercion within it. Luo Lang truly believed in anything Boss Lan decided, so these words of his had no hesitation behind it whatsoever.

"Boss's decision is our decision!" Lin Zhong-qing was very cool about the issue. But it was precisely this cool calmness that convinced the captain that they were truly prepared to sacrifice themselves.

Due to the overwhelming shock, the captain did not notice the small actions that passed amongst Xie Yi, Luo Lang, and Lin Zhong-qing. Meanwhile, the other four also took the hint from the three of them and all began speaking out in support of Ling Lan's decision.

"You're all lunatics!" The captain could only bite out these words in response. Ling

Lan's decision gave the captain no avenue to utilise his skills. He dared not move for fear of killing Ling Lan by accident, for the entire ship would self-destruct if that happened.

He roughly wiped a hand across his face and growled, "Speak. What exactly do you all want?"

"For this one day and one night, we are the masters of the ship. Meanwhile, you will all have to satisfy our every need, including teaching us what we wish to learn. When we arrive at the true registration point of the First Men's Military Academy, then I will hand over the administrative rights to the ship," responded Ling Lan, "This is our offer. You are free to reject it, then we shall both perish together."

The captain pointed a trembling finger at Ling Lan, finally choking out, "You're ruthless!"

"If I'm not ruthless, could I have gotten what I wanted?" asked Ling Lan with a quirked brow. If she had not snatched the administrative rights of the ship, would the captain have agreed so easily?

"Also, stop with those tests. They're pointless!" Ling Lan's subsequent words made the captain's and the major's expressions turn awkward — so their actions had long been figured out by the opponent. "If it weren't for those tests, I would not have made such a big deal of things..."

Ling Lan decisively threw all responsibility for the matter on the other party's shoulders, as if saying that this dramatic outcome was completely the fault of the captain and his team. This frustrated the captain and the major so much that they almost spewed blood.

Hells, they had never seen such a shameless cadet before. Were all new cadets nowadays so arrogant, despicable, and shameless?

"That aside, little mainframe, don't disobey me!" Ling Lan coldly prodded at the mainframe's light rings once more, causing the little body of the mainframe within the virtual space to tremble involuntarily. He hurriedly hugged the thigh of Little Four standing to one side, crying, "Boo hoo hoo, senior's master is really scary!"

Little Four could not help but roll his eyes, wondering somewhat irritably why this little fellow was so gutless? His boss was so nice! Not only was she gentle... er, maybe

not that, and kind-hearted... er, she seemed to bully him quite a lot too?

Little Four felt himself becoming somewhat confused, but he very quickly cast aside all those doubts, telling himself firmly once more that his boss was the best boss ever! And that was that!

To complete the task that his boss had set for him, the now doubt-free Little Four could only continue to cajole and counsel the mainframe. This patient manner left the impression that his senior was a great and wonderful person in the little fellow's mind, which would eventually lead the little mainframe to help them without any reservations later on in the future when Little Four requested his aid...

After that, things were much simpler. The captain announced in the ship-wide comms channel that in the duration before they arrived at the destination, the ship shall be controlled by the cadets! This declaration acknowledged the shift in administrative rights. The initially arrogant crew were instantly knocked down to become servants, while the cadets finally achieved their goal of overthrowing their overlords, becoming the masters of the ship from their initial lowly positions of easily bullied peons.

However, the Central Scout Academy students soon received Boss Lan's instructions, hoping that they would take advantage of this opportunity to learn whatever knowledge they were interested in with regards to spaceships <sup>2</sup>. Of course, how they could convince and persuade those crew members to teach them with sincerity all depended on the students' own abilities.

Meanwhile, under the captain's tacit agreement, the crew also began mentoring the cadets in whatever they wanted to learn. Thus, the initially tense atmosphere between the two sides swiftly settled into a calm harmony, with completely no sign that a large conflict had occurred not too long ago.

Just as Ling Lan had predicted, everyone on the ship — from captain to crew member, from mecha operator to repairman and odd-job worker — was actually soldiers of the Federation. Therefore, they would not hate the cadets out of anger at their revolt. They may perhaps be somewhat peeved that they were bested, but they were still extremely admiring of the new cadets' spirit and capabilities — this was also the greatest reason why they were willing to mentor the students despite all that had happened.

These soldiers knew very well that these cadets before them would become the central pillars of the Federation armies six years later... they were extremely pleased

to see a bunch of exceptional warriors appear within their military ranks.

Meanwhile, those students not belonging to the Central Scout Academy did not receive Ling Lan's guidance on what to do. For one, they had not participated in the operation this time (those that did were also advised by Ling Lan), so Ling Lan felt that she was not obligated to give them any hints. And second, if the student was mindful, he would definitely be able to figure out the objectives of the Central Scout Academy students. Just by observing their speech and actions, those students should know what to do.

As for those that were a little slow who just did not sense anything... Ling Lan did not believe they would be able to progress much in the future anyway. The opportunity was the same for everyone — whoever could grab hold of it would make their own luck.

And those who were truly strong would not let these lucky chances slip by!



# Chapter 220

## Space Fortress!

A particular meteoroid zone within the Federation was once an intergalactic flight course of the Federation. However, several centuries before, the meteoroids in this zone began to drift about wildly, their movement trajectories becoming extremely erratic and unpredictable, resulting in multiple tragic collisions due to the spaceships' inability to dodge them in time. Thus, this flight course was gradually abandoned by the Federation...

What everyone did not know was that at the heart of this meteoroid zone, there was a space fortress disguised as a large meteorite mountain. Inside it was a hidden Federation military base...

Meanwhile, those erratically moving little meteoroids surrounding the area were actually defensive satellites of the space fortress. The moment they discovered any unidentified spaceships deviating from the permitted flight path, they would hurtle over to chase the other away. If the other party insisted on keeping their path, the defensive satellites would then collide with the ships in earnest, directly destroying the offending spaceships.



It was one o'clock in the afternoon in the Federation. Inside the space fortress, the few surveillance staff responsible for monitoring the situation around the meteoroid zone were currently cosily seated together drinking some hot tea. After a busy morning, they could finally take some time to relax and chitchat for a bit after having their lunch.

"Who could have expected that in just one morning, we've already received nine ships ferrying the new cadets. It's really been crazy busy..." One young surveillance officer of corporal rank complained as he stretched.

"Xiao Lin <sup>1</sup>, you're new here, so you don't know. This is our busiest time every year. All the students who managed to get into the First Men's Military Academy will come through here," said another young officer of second lieutenant rank with a smile, "And

this is just the beginning. Most likely we'll be even busier in the afternoon. All of the respective spaceships picking up the new cadets from the various planets will definitely arrive by the end of today."

The second lieutenant's words received nods of agreement from all of the other officers. They had already been working here at this fortress for two to three years, so they were familiar with this situation.

The corporal called Xiao Lin slapped a palm to his forehead and moaned exaggeratedly at those words. "Heavens, there'll be more this afternoon? I'll definitely be wiped out!"

The second lieutenant cuffed him on the head exasperatedly, chiding him teasingly, "Wiped out from just this little thing? What a useless fellow."

Chastised, Xiao Lin hurriedly proclaimed his tenacious spirit which had no fear of difficulty or fatigue with a serious face to his leader. His antics caused the surveillance station to be a riot of laughter; the weariness of the morning seeming to fade away slowly between the peals of laughter.

Although the fortress had pretty good working conditions on all fronts, the work there was relatively monotonous compared to those of the other bases. In particular, these surveillance staff had to face the same unchanging meteoroid zone every day, so it was very easy for them to become somewhat sick of the job. Therefore, they had learned to self-calibrate their mentalities, learning not to just stay silent and grim the whole time they were working. Instead, they would do as they were doing now, joking around light-heartedly to ease their minds.

After a round of laughter, Xiao Lin suddenly snorted loudly, as if recalling something.

The second lieutenant glanced at him and asked, "What's up with you now?" This fellow would always come up with some situation or another every day; the second lieutenant was no longer surprised by this.

Xiao Lin covered his mouth as he snickered, "I'm just laughing at those new cadets. When they get off the ships, they're all so cautious, obedient like little rabbits. I've always thought that those who could enter the First Men's Military Academy would all be the super elites, that they would be somewhat cocky and unruly, or maybe haughty in their expressions or something..."

The second lieutenant smiled and said, "That's just how it is now. They were not like

that in the past. They were cocky and unruly just as you said..."

Xiao Lin's curiosity was piqued by this statement. He asked hurriedly, "Leader, why do you say that?"

The second lieutenant said, "Honestly, I did not experience that time either. I've only heard about it from the last leader. He said that the new cadets did not use to be so obedient — like you said, they were all sorts of trouble, making a mess out of this area. In the end, the chief of base could not take it anymore and reported it to the superiors. And later, the situation became better, gradually becoming like what you see now, where all the new cadets are docile and obedient."

"Could it be that the quality of the cadets improved? Or perhaps they had been instructed by their scout academies?" asked Xiao Lin.

The second lieutenant smiled and said, "How could that be? Our Federation has always lived by the law of survival of the fittest. In order to cultivate strong fighters, the scout academies would never curb the students' competitive spirit and wilfulness."

"Then what could have caused the new cadets to become so docile?" Xiao Lin just could not figure it out.

Right then, one of the staff sergeants chortled and said, "That's because the ships sent out to pick up these new cadets are all the most outstanding of our army fleets. The members staffing them are all battle-experienced soldiers. Even if these new cadets are prideful elites with prodigious talent, they can only submit and give way before these hardened soldiers. Furthermore, military headquarters' instructions to these old soldiers on the ships were to beat down these elite princes a little, letting them understand that they are still really small fry right now and still haven't earned the right to be cocky..."

Xiao Lin gaped in shock. "In other words, these new cadets have all been suppressed by our veteran soldiers?"

"Bingo!" Another sergeant chimed in with a laugh, "It's rare that our Xiao Lin is so smart for once..."

Xiao Lin did not seem to sense the teasing nature of the sergeant's words. In an extremely thick-skinned manner, he said, "That's right, I've always been unbelievably clever!" This once again caused the entire surveillance station to become a sea of

laughter.

"Attention everyone, another ship is incoming!" The smiling second lieutenant suddenly noticed a ship entering their surveillance range, and quickly alerted his subordinates.

The group immediately kept away their laughter, returned to their work stations, and began attending to their respective tasks.

"Checking data. Primary identification as the 7th Bugle Call from planet Doha!" A sergeant extracted the data of the ship and found a corresponding match.

"The other is sending a signal requesting permission to enter. The signal code has been authenticated!" Xiao Lin deciphered the signal source transmitted by the 7th Bugle Call, and after verifying that everything was in order, he reported to his leader.

The second lieutenant nodded and instructed, "Accept communications from signal source!"

Subsequently, a transparent pane of glass at the front of the surveillance station suddenly lighted up, and then a familiar figure appeared on it. Apparently, this viewing window which looked out at the starry skies also functioned as a giant screen.

The second lieutenant saw the figure and immediately stood at attention and saluted, "Senior Colonel Tian Fang! Greetings!"

Senior Colonel Tian Fang, who was the captain of the 7th Bugle Call, smiled wryly at this and said, "Greetings!"

"Please wait a moment. We shall arrange the parking port for your ship." The second lieutenant sent the data of the 7th Bugle Call to air control. Soon, the department had responded and connected to the 7th Bugle Call's voice comms.

Only after Senior Colonel Tian Fang's figure disappeared from the large screen did the second lieutenant breathe out weakly. Even just as an image, the pressure Senior Colonel Tian Fang exuded was still extremely overwhelming — this was probably what the presence of someone strong was all about.

Xiao Lin wiped the cold sweat from his forehead and said somewhat hesitantly, "Just looking at Senior Colonel Tian Fang's virtual image is enough to make me feel like I

can't breathe. He's so strong! What kind of godly being is Senior Colonel Tian Fang exactly?"

The second lieutenant's face was filled with admiration and respect as he said, "He is the only one among the fleet captains who has entered Domain stage. Even though he is not a specialised mecha operator, his mecha control is also already at ace operator level. He is the 'earth powerhouse' of the 'heaven and earth powerhouse duo' of our Federation!"

"Ah! So he is the earth powerhouse of the heaven and earth powerhouse duo..." Xiao Lin's eyes revealed his brimming admiration and respect. Compared to the god-class operator, who were like beings from legend, ace operators were undoubtedly closer to the grass roots. As such, they were respected and looked up to by countless warriors, who viewed them as their goal.

"Why would such an amazing person be sent out on this kind of mission?" Xiao Lin felt indignant on Senior Colonel Tian Fang's behalf.

"The place he went to is Doha. The cadets there include those from the Central Scout Academy, the gathering grounds of the cream of our Federation. Without someone like Senior Colonel Tian Fang, could they hold the fort against those top-notch prodigies?" The second lieutenant chided Xiao Lin for his shallow thinking. Although Doha had indeed not produced many top-notch prodigies over the past couple years, it was never wise to underestimate these sort of established brand schools with substantial roots. Who knew if an aberrant would suddenly appear?



Senior Colonel Tian Fang knew nothing of this discussion in the surveillance station that had been sparked by his appearance. Right now, he had already relinquished the captain's seat again and was standing in front of the screen, sullenly watching the new cadets bustling around the central control room.

Even though the cadets had gone through a day and a night of learning, they were still noticeably inexperienced in controlling the ship. Many times, they failed to pilot the ship to the coordinates provided by the fortress, and air control was beginning to become a little irritated.

Senior Colonel Tian Fang felt so embarrassed he could die. He knew that the staff in

the fortress would certainly be speculating that he was drunk again... his lifelong good reputation would definitely be lost here, but he could not explain things to the outside world, because the truth was even more embarrassing.

Senior Colonel Tian Fang looked at Ling Lan sitting in the captain's seat, as composed as ever, as if not at all concerned that the cadets would ruin the ship through their bumbling efforts. He could not help but ask, "Why aren't you at all nervous?"

"If the sky wants to rain, if your mother wants to remarry <sup>2</sup>! What will be will be!" replied Ling Lan breezily. As long as the ship was not utterly destroyed, she had no objections. After all, this spaceship wasn't really hers anyway.

Senior Colonel Tian Fang instantly choked on a breath and said moodily, "I have never met anyone as daring as you."

Ling Lan's lips curved up subtly. "Otherwise I would not have been able to take over your ship." Completely uncaring that she was adding yet another stab to Senior Colonel Tian Fang's heart.

Senior Colonel Tian Fang was infuriated, and he muttered angrily, "I can't imagine who could have raised such a crazy son like you... hells, doing this kind of things beyond human understanding."

The corner of Ling Lan's lips quirked, "Why, you wish to know? Perhaps you want to spar a little with my father?"

For some reason, Senior Colonel Tian Fang once again felt a surging sense of danger like none other he had felt before. His gut told him that he definitely should not respond and take the bait, but the indignation in his heart made him blurt out, "Of course, this old man should not bully the young, but why can't I go fight the elder?"

Ling Lan slowly approached Senior Colonel Tian Fang and then said airily, "You are welcome to go seek out General Ling Xiao!" Ling Lan's tone was filled with teasing mockery, obviously greatly looking forward to Senior Colonel Tian Fang seeking out her father for a fight.

"General L-Ling... Ling Xiao?!" Senior Colonel Tian Fang gaped, struck dumb by Ling Lan's answer. Still, he had no doubts that this was true. After spending one day and night with Ling Lan, he knew that the other did not bother with lies. Besides, only someone like General Ling Xiao could give birth to such an aberrant son like Ling Lan.

At this moment, Senior Colonel Tian Fang had completely forgotten the research proof of the Federation — the theory that said that the gene potentials of the descendants of god-class operators were destined to plummet.

# Chapter 221

## Salute!

The major saw Ling Lan saunter out of the captain's room, while his own captain stood there staring blankly. Without a word, he walked over and nudged his old friend, "What are you zoning out for?"

Senior Colonel Tian Fang smiled wryly and said, "We did not lose randomly."

"Why do you say that?" asked the major curiously.

"Ling Lan is General Ling Xiao's son..." mumbled Senior Colonel Tian Fang. Earlier, he had actually said he would go teach General Ling Xiao a lesson — this was absolutely a path towards death...

The major was greatly shocked by the news. "What?!" However, he soon calmed down again. Thinking back on all Ling Lan had done over this period of time, as well as the ruthlessness and determination with which he threatened Tian Fang — this was definitely not something a normal student would be able to do...

He sighed softly and said, "Only General Ling Xiao could raise such an aberrant child... sure enough, a tiger would never father hounds <sup>1</sup>." That said, he shared a glance with Senior Colonel Tian Fang, each seeing the excitement and joy in the other's eyes. Knowing that the person they idolised had an inheritor made them extremely glad, and their initial sense of defeat was significantly reduced.



By this time, Ling Lan had already arrived at the central control room. The central control room was presently under Han Jijyun's command. Seeing Ling Lan enter the room, Han Jijyun quickly rushed over to ask, "Boss Lan, any instructions?"

"If you all have had your fun, I hope that we'll be able to land properly on the landing frame the next time." Ling Lan's tone was light, as if just here to pass on a comment.



Ling Lan's words made Han Jijyun's face flush red, and he immediately responded, "Understood. Boss Lan, we'll definitely land successfully the next time!"

Just as Ling Lan said, the cadets here under Han Jijyun had indeed gotten caught up in playing. This was because piloting a ship to land accurately was an extremely rare practicum to encounter, so the cadets in the central control room had not wanted to end it so soon. Thus, this had resulted in the ship's multiple failures to land correctly, because the cadets still wanted to try one more time.

Ling Lan and Han Jijyun's conversation was not something Senior Colonel Tian Fang and the major could know of, because Little Four had long screened off this scene from the cameras. Frankly, in the captain's room, Ling Lan too had found the multiple failed attempts at landing objectionable. However, she could not scorn her followers in front of outsiders, which was why she had acted as if she was not at all bothered by it and fooled the other two in the room with her.



Meanwhile, at this time, within the control tower of the fortress, the air control staff responsible for guiding the 7th Bugle Call could not help but shut off the communication device linked to the ship angrily and growl, "Godd\*mmit, what the hell is wrong with the 7th Bugle Call? Are the pilots all drunk off their asses?! Actually failing to land so many times..." The 7th Bugle Call had never been this troublesome to handle before — one coordinate was all it took for them to land efficiently and end things. When had it ever been necessary for him to roar out coordinates again and again?

"Be a little more patient. Senior Colonel Tian Fang of the 7th Bugle Call is not someone you want to offend. He protects his own the most." A friend beside him, who was also an air control staff, piped up with quiet words of caution.

"I know. Otherwise I wouldn't have turned off the communicator and just scolded them outright already," grumbled the air control staff.

"Alright, you see, the 7th Bugle Call seems to have found the correct position now..." Another companion inadvertently saw the 7th Bugle Call move and immediately raised his voice to alert him.

"D\*mmit, finally! I really was about to be frustrated to death. I have never seen such

an incompetent ship pilot — does he actually have a license?" Grumbling to himself, the air control staff once again turned on the communicator and issued the subsequent instructions. Of course, from the moment he turned on the mic, his voice became calm and patient, as if his earlier displeasure was just an illusion.

"Attention, a notification came from the surveillance station, another ship is coming..." The staff receiving messages in the control tower alerted the free air control staff so that someone could step up to direct the new incoming ship.

"I'll do it!" The first air control staff who had cautioned his companion accepted this assignment. He then connected to the other's comms signal and said, "Hello, I am number 72, an air control staff at Fort Genesis..."



This time, the 7th Bugle Call cleanly and efficiently alighted on the landing frame of the fortress dock. Han Jijyun had directly passed on Ling Lan's original words to caution the overly excited cadets, bringing them to heel instantly to obediently listen to Han Jijyun's orders, no longer daring to fool around.

This caused the spectating flight crew enjoying the show to be a little disappointed, but they were silently impressed at the esteem Ling Lan held among the cadets. Of course, they were also very admiring of the way Han Jijyun had used Ling Lan's authority to swiftly take control of the central control room.

Meanwhile, landing alongside the 7th Bugle Call was another spaceship slightly smaller than the 7th Bugle Call. It landed to park at the dock neighbouring theirs. Perhaps the cadets on that ship were fewer, for the ship doors opened a little earlier than that of the 7th Bugle Call, and ten or so students disembarked one after another from the ship.

Just as with the previous ships, these new cadets had their heads bowed in timid silence, walking hesitantly onto the platform. Then, under the instructions of the fortress guides, they swiftly departed to wherever they needed to go. The speed with which they moved was as if they were running away from some dragon's lair or tiger's den — footsteps in clear disarray.

The soldiers on duty at the platform looked on expressionlessly as these dejected and skittish youths emerged and ran away. Only those with a keen eye could see the trace

of contempt in their eyes — they did not like this cowardly manner of the youths, believing that this was a disgrace to soldiers.

However, they were already used to this. Almost no cadet would behave differently — even those rare few who had some fight on their faces would hold back and forcefully repress the indignation they felt, merely gritting their teeth to walk into the fortress. If any youth were to strut out proudly with their head held high from a ship, now *that* would be a shocking sight for these soldiers.

Initially, the soldiers had thought that this scene would never happen, but reality would soon prove that anything was possible.

The doors of the 7th Bugle Call finally swung open, and the new cadets, who had already gathered their belongings, stepped out of the ship with faces filled with excitement. Their eyes were brimming with curiosity, and some of the more daring ones were even asking those staff on duty in low whispers what the weapons they were carrying were. This sort of unusual behaviour made all the staff on duty share baffled looks with one another, beginning to doubt whether the people from this ship were truly new cadets for this year? Or were they a group of tourists here to sightsee at the fortress?

Of course, the latter possibility was impossible — Fort Genesis was a secret fortress of the Federation, and so was not open to the public. Thus, there would naturally be no such thing as tourists here to sightsee. The reason why the soldiers on duty would have this mistaken impression was entirely because these new cadets had no fear in their eyes, no trepidation, no shame, and no rage or indignation. All there was was excitement, curiosity, as well as that conspicuous confidence and haughtiness.

After the cadets disembarked, they did not move according to the instructions of the fortress guides. They remained standing on the platform, patiently waiting for the students after them to disembark as well. This made the guides rather annoyed, beginning to blame the comrades on the ship for not doing their part and educating these new cadets well.

Once everyone had gotten off the ship, Ling Lan threw a look at Qi Long.

Qi Long immediately raised his voice and shouted, "To thank all the staff of the 7th Bugle Call, salute!"

All the cadets from the ship were seen to stand at attention, and facing the crew of the 7th Bugle Call who remained on the ship, they collectively executed their scout's salute! This was something they had decided even before they had left the ship. Over the course of this one day and night, the staff members of the 7th Bugle Call had helped them all immensely — every student had learned a little of whatever they had wanted to learn to some extent. This made the students all extremely grateful.

"Salute!" Inside the ship, Senior Colonel Tian Fang's booming voice rang out. At that, the soldiers at the entrance of the ship, as well as those in places the cadets could not see, who were looking at the cadets saluting them with serious faces on various screens, responded primly in kind with the exclusive military salute of the Federation soldiers!

"Thank you!"

This solemn and grateful reciprocal military salute caused everyone present at the scene to be stupefied!

Several new cadets from the other ship who had yet to leave also revealed flabbergasted expressions at this scene. However, very quickly, their faces darkened — they were all new cadets of the military academy, why was the other party treated so differently?

"Where are those new cadets from?" One of the more daring new cadets asked a guide beside him.

"They're from Doha." This was not a secret to begin with, so the guide responded without any reservations.

"Doha? That place which is the so-called gathering grounds of the prodigies of the Federation?" said the new cadet through clenched teeth. Just because their talent was better, they deserved this preferential treatment? Their eyes filled with envy and dislike...

At this moment, Ling Lan and the others of her party did not know that their actions had drawn the envy and disgruntlement of the cadets from the other various planets. Those cadets were all secretly plotting how they would show these elites a thing or two at the military academy...

At the command centre of Fort Genesis, the supreme commander of the base, Major General Jing Ren, was seated as he watched all that was happening after the 7th Bugle Call parked at the dock. He could not help but mutter to himself, "How strange, that fellow Tian Fang is not someone that nice..."

Right at this moment, the main door to the room was shoved open roughly, and a hulking figure walked in unceremoniously to slump into the large sofa before the Major General's desk, hiking up a leg to rest his ankle on the other leg's knee without any concern for decorum.

Major General Jing Ren could not help but shake his head and say, "Tian Fang, could you please maintain some decorum? No matter what, you're still one of the poster children for the Federation soldiers."

"It's not like I want to be one!" Senior Colonel Tian Fang said dismissively, with no sign that he was planning to change.

Major General Jing Ren knew the temperament of his old friend well, and so did not continue to harp on the topic. He pointed at the screen in front of him, which was still playing the scene where the two sides had saluted one another, and asked, "What exactly was this about? Could it be that you had a sudden fit of kindness?"

Tian Fang looked at the image and instantly grimaced. "Don't bring that up anymore, otherwise I'll be frustrated to death."

Major General Jing Ren was taken aback and quickly asked, "What happened?"

Tian Fang could not help but lift a large hand to cover his face as he said, "This embarrassing thing, I really don't feel like talking about it..."

Right then, a clear voice rang out from the doorway, "Of course he doesn't want to talk about it. This time, we were defeated soundly." The major from the 7th Bugle Call had arrived.

"Luo Yang, you've come as well." Major General Jing Ren's expression was pleased as he quickly stood up in welcome.

Major Luo Yang shut the door as he came in and then walked forward with a smile. He

bumped fists with Major General Jing Ren — this was their special way of greeting one another.

# Chapter 222

## What Right?

Major General Jing Ren <sup>1</sup> said plaintively, "Every time you pass through here, you never come over to visit me."

"You know that one of us, either I or Tian Fang, have to remain with the 7th Bugle Call," said Luo Yang with a wry smile.

"I shouldn't have let you go with Tian Fang from the start. If you had followed me, right now you too should already be a senior colonel." Major General Jing Ren glanced coolly at Tian Fang, as if blaming Tian Fang for holding back Luo Yang's progress.

Senior Colonel Tian Fang could only rub his nose and stay silent. At the beginning, it was indeed he that had clung to Luo Yang and begged him to help him, because he knew that it was impossible for him with his brash and forthright personality to handle all those miscellaneous trivial things associated with running a ship. Thus, he had to find a trustworthy friend to help him, and Luo Yang was his only choice.

"But, why could you both come down this time?" asked Jing Ren curiously.

"Because the 7th Bugle Call is currently undergoing a system reset, so there's nothing I can do there anyway," replied Luo Yang.

"Reset?" Jing Ren's face paled slightly. "What in the world happened?" Unless something major occurred or the system became corrupted, there would be no need to reset the system — it looked like the 7th Bugle Call had indeed gone through some major incident.

Luo Yang and Tian Fang glanced at each other and smiled wryly. In the end, Luo Yang was the one who answered, "Honestly, this incident could be seen as major, but could also be seen as minor. Our ship was taken over by the new cadets from Doha."

"Personnel control?" Jing Ren saw the wry smiles on their faces and his expression changed drastically, "Could it be that the administrative rights of the ship changed hands?"

Senior Colonel Tian Fang chuckled dryly and said, "Exactly!" If not for this reason, would anyone on board have been able to control a Domain master like himself?

It took a long while for Jing Ren's fluctuating complexion to ease and recover. His expression was grim as he said, "This matter must not be discovered by military headquarters. Otherwise, both of you will be punished, perhaps even court-martialled if you're unlucky."

"With so many cadets involved, this matter may not be able to be contained," said Luo Yang, "However, as long as one person is willing to help, we will be fine."

Jing Ren's expression twitched, "What do you mean?"

"As long as General Ling Xiao is willing to bury this incident..."

"General Ling Xiao!" shouted Jing Ren, "How would that be possible? For what reason would he move to help us?"

"Because, the head of the new cadets who successfully conquered the 7th Bugle Call was none other than General Ling Xiao's son. If we don't ask him to resolve this, who should we ask instead?" Senior Colonel Tian Fang threw down a bomb directly.

"What?! General Ling Xiao has a son?" Jing Ren was in disbelief. He covered his forehead with his left hand and waved his right hand at them, saying, "Hold on, let me organise my thoughts for a moment. This news is a bit too much, my brain's CPU can't process it so quickly."

Finally, Major General Jing Ren regained his composure. He thought for a moment — it was true that the only one who could intervene and would be willing to intervene was General Ling Xiao. However, Major General Jing Ren was still a little worried. "Will General Ling Xiao intervene just because his son was involved?"

Senior Colonel Tian Fang chuckled and said, "Before he left, Ling Lan hinted for me to go seek out General Ling Xiao!"

"This Ling Lan is General Ling Xiao's son then? Had he already considered the consequences?" If that was the case, this youth Ling Lan was really not simple. A brilliant gleam of light flashed across Jing Ren's eyes.

"Whether it was in terms of skill or strategy, he was very strong. His future



achievements are very likely to be no less outstanding than General Ling Xiao's." Luo Yang greatly admired Ling Lan, believing that the other's future was immeasurable.

"That brat is as bold as brass, and his heart is strong enough to make hard decisions, no matter whether it's against himself or his companions. Even I am a little chilled by how ruthless he can be..." said Senior Colonel Tian Fang with a solemn expression as he stroked his jaw, "I'm very worried he will go too far."

Senior Colonel Tian Fang had a different opinion than the major. He was afraid that after this triumph, Ling Lan would become even more uninhibited. If he encountered someone even more ruthless than himself, he might spiral awry terribly.

"He is only sixteen years old," Luo Yang reminded Tian Fang, "There are too many future possibilities, we cannot just come to a conclusion so soon!"

Tian Fang fell silent, but the worry in his heart was not completely quelled. Ling Lan was indeed abnormally exceptional on so many fronts, but the more aberrant one was, the more terrible the consequences if one ended up on the wrong path.

"Hey, what are you worrying for? Isn't he General Ling Xiao's son?" Jing Ren reminded Tian Fang. With the large tree Ling Xiao to provide shade, they should not be worrying over mere conjectures.

Tian Fang was enlightened and instantly broke out into laughter. In his mind, he felt somewhat awed at the fact that Ling Lan had left such a deep impression on him that it had made him forget about General Ling Xiao. How fearsome was his force of presence that it could suppress the thought of his personal idol...



Meanwhile, at this moment, Ling Lan and company were making their glorious way to the venue prepared for the new cadets to eat and rest — the fortress cafeteria. They had already been notified by the guides that they would board a new spaceship at 5pm in the afternoon to begin the next leg of their journey.

"Boss Lan, it's just as you predicted. This is a transfer station," said Han Jijyun softly. Ever since Ling Lan had found out that their destination was here, she had predicted that this was very likely just a transit point, and it was now proven that Ling Lan's prediction was right.

Such a large party suddenly entering the cafeteria, dressed in attire which was not Federation military uniform — it was obvious that these people were new cadets of the military academy. However, this batch of cadets all had smiles on their faces, easy and carefree, and when they entered the cafeteria, they were not as quiet as the other cadets before them. Quite a few of them were happily chatting with one another, the atmosphere of the group exceptionally lively.

The attention of all the other new cadets in the cafeteria was instantly drawn to the group, all of them trying to guess which planet these people were from.

At a round table in a corner, a group of about ten cadets was also looking at the party. One of the cadets, a youth with a cultured and refined air, had a contemplative expression on his face.

"Zhou Ya? What have you discovered?" A youth with a lazy expression by his side noticed his serious expression, and spoke up to ask.

The contemplative youth was jolted out of his thoughts. His brow furrowed and he said, "Wang Hui, this batch of people are not simple. We should not cross them for no reason." Zhou Ya glanced at his companion beside him, and gave these words of caution.

"Oh?" Wang Hui did not seem to think much of his friend's warning, and his expression reflected his nonchalance.

"The group is not divided. They all chose to sit together. This means that there must be a central figure among them, perhaps someone strong enough that everyone is willing to defer to... we have just entered the military academy. Before we figure out the other's strength, it is best we do not offend them simply." Zhou Ya did not think that they could go up against these several hundred people with just the ten of them. Even if his group were all exceptionally capable, they could not hope to prevail against those many fists.

At this time, a youth who had been outside scouting for information returned and leaned over by Wang Hui's ear to elaborate on the others' background. Wang Hui's expression, which had tightened up a little due to Zhou Ya's words, became relaxed once more after hearing what the scout had to say. He said mockingly, "So they are from Doha. What use is there even if they have more people? Who have they produced over these past couple of years? Haven't they still been pushed below our Wuji Galaxy

<sup>2</sup> for three consecutive years, unable to do anything about it?"

"Although Doha has not produced anyone of note these last few years, it is still the gathering ground of the various notable prodigies of the Federation, after all. We cannot underestimate them." Zhou Ya was undoubtedly cautious — before they found out more about the other, he did not approve of offending the other without good reason.

"Alright, I'm not going to argue with you. As long as they don't bother us, I definitely won't bother them first." Wang Hui finally lifted his hands in surrender after Zhou Ya's multiple warnings. He then changed the topic and said, "Zhou Ya, Do you get the feeling that their expressions are a little different from those of the other cadets from the other planets? It's as if they did not receive much suffering. Could it be that they were not harassed by the crew of their ship at all?"

It should be known that along the way, they had been harassed endlessly by the crew on their ship. Although they had tried to resist at first, as they saw the numbers the other side had, as well as the other side's strength, they had had no choice but to lower their heads in submission. However, perhaps because the ten of them had proved themselves stronger than the other cadets by a head, those crew members had seemed to go a little easier on them. The crew had not bullied them as harshly as they had with the other students, almost causing those other cadets to lose their confidence.

Zhou Ya too had this doubt in his mind. "This, is also something I would like to know." Why could they still maintain the brimming confidence and haughtiness of their youth? After this journey, even the always cocky Wang Hui had become much more reserved, knowing how to take a step back and take others' reactions into consideration.

Zhou Ya mumbled to himself, "We'll be travelling with them later on. We'll definitely be able to find out some answers to this mystery."

There were not many people in the cafeteria; Ling Lan and the others very easily found a relatively spacious area to sit at. As usual, Ling Lan's team, Wu Jiong's team, and Li Yingjie's team each took a round table, while the other teams spread out to settle around the tables circling these three teams. Ever since finding out that these teams before them had orchestrated the conquest of the ship, giving them the learning opportunities on the ship, those students who were not from the Central Scout

Academy too did not want to get separated from these strong teams.

Any student who could get into the First Men's Military Academy was definitely intelligent; they knew which option was better for them. Thus, they too followed the example of the Central Scout Academy students, choosing seats alongside them to sit in. This conspicuous unity raised flags among the other groups of students.

Several youths who were rather close to Ling Lan's end even left their original seats to choose somewhere farther away to sit.

Right then, Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie walked over to greet Ling Lan, saying, "Boss Lan, we have something to discuss with you."

Ling Lan indicated for the two to sit down.

Li Yingjie peered at those other cadets who were side-eyeing them with vaguely palpable animosity, and scoffed, "Looks like they don't welcome us here."

Wu Jiong laughed and said, "Was our entrance too grand?"

Ling Lan thought for a moment and nodded. "Just a little! I think, as the number of cadets increase, there will only be more people who hate us."

Li Yingjie was just about to say something when he saw ten or so people giving trouble to the Doha cadets at the fringes of the circle. He frowned and said, "There's someone looking for trouble with us?"

Wu Jiong had also seen it. "It's not our Central Scout Academy. They're bothering the cadets from the other Doha scout academies."

"Should we help?" Qi Long looked towards Ling Lan. Even if those people were not from their Central Scout Academy, they were still from Doha, companions from the same planet. Qi Long did not want to see them being bullied.

"Let's leave this to Li Yingjie." Ling Lan's words made the small group turn to look at her in shock.

"Why?" asked Li Yingjie with a disgruntled expression. Hells, it wasn't like he was Ling Lan's follower... what right did Ling Lan have to order him around?

## Chapter 223

### Natural Born Rogue!

"In their eyes, we already are one group. Or, are you saying you want to be separate from us?" Ling Lan glanced at Li Yingjie coldly, her piercing and frosty gaze causing Li Yingjie's initial disgruntlement to disappear instantly. Still, he turned to look unhappily at Qi Long and said, "Qi Long is stronger than me. Wouldn't it be better for him to go?"

Ling Lan's slender fingers gripped Qi Long's lower jaw abruptly, pulling him forward to let Li Yingjie take a good look at that affable face with its honest grin. She asked calmly, "This face. Do you think it looks like a domineering and unreasonable, arrogant face which would bully others?"

Li Yingjie choked, and seeing Qi Long grinning guilelessly at him, his eyelid began twitching violently. This face of Qi Long's was the exemplar of 'I am an honest man; I am a good person'. If he stepped forward... let alone suppressing the other party, he would most definitely end up raising the other party's morale. Even if they managed to defeat the other in the end, the other side would still have doubts whether the result was due to their own carelessness. It would have no deterrent effect whatsoever...

Just as when he had first lost to Qi Long, that feeling of not being convinced, thinking that it was all his own carelessness... No, even now, he still wasn't convinced by the other. Even though he knew very well that Qi Long was indeed stronger than him by a hair, he just could not muster up true deference for Qi Long.

Li Yingjie subconsciously peeked at Ling Lan, and then looked again at the silly grin on Qi Long's face. He suddenly understood why he could not defer to Qi Long — because Qi Long lacked the type of nature-defying domineering air that Ling Lan exuded! Although Boss Lan had tucked away that domineering air very cleanly at the moment, when he unleashed it during confrontations, that air was enough to make him quake in his boots. This fear had slowly seeped into his bones with the passage of time, causing him to no longer be able to even conceive the notion of resisting.

"Our group cannot only have one image to present to the public. Our amicable and reasonable side can be assigned to Qi Long." Ling Lan released Qi Long's jaw, retracting

her right hand.

Seated beside Ling Lan, Luo Lang took a wet wipe out from his backpack with an expression of disgust. Lifting up Ling Lan's right hand, he carefully and meticulously wiped Ling Lan's slender jade fingers clean. Fine, he admits that he thinks Qi Long's oily face would really sully Boss Lan's graceful and beautiful fair hand — he needed to serve his boss well by cleaning his hand up.

This scene rendered Qi Long speechless. Hells, was he being viewed as a virus right now?

As one of the parties involved, green veins popped up on both of Ling Lan's temples, twitching. However, seeing Luo Lang's serious expression, Ling Lan decided to just ignore this and let him do what he wanted. After all, she was just temporarily giving up her right hand and there really wasn't any harm in this. At the very least, it was hygienic — she would not have to go wash her hands specially after this.

Ling Lan studiously ignored the others' side-eyes, and continued to say, "Being cocky is equally important — this can deter some minor villains from crossing us simply. We also need to be domineering sometimes. At times, acting right away is much more effective than arguing back and forth with people." Ling Lan clearly stated her opinion. In order to thrive in the First Men's Military Academy, constantly compromising and being accommodating was not the best plan.

Wu Jiong nodded thoughtfully while Han Jijyun stared blankly. Then, like a window had been opened, his gaze grew brighter and brighter — did Boss Lan mean to use both soft and hard tactics simultaneously? Being forceful on both fronts?

"But why do I have to act?" Li Yingjie still did not comprehend Ling Lan's decision. Qi Long may be unsuitable, but wasn't there still Wu Jiong?

Ling Lan cast a glance at him and her lips quirked up slightly, "An arrogant rich family's son — isn't that your original form?"

These words of Ling Lan made Wu Jiong, Qi Long, and the others burst out into laughter. Those team members sitting close enough to hear, including those from Li Yingjie's team all laughed secretly as well — they were recalling Li Yingjie's arrogant behaviour when he had first entered the scout academy. It was as Boss Lan said — Li Yingjie had truly been an annoying, wildly arrogant, and self-conceited descendant

from an elite family.

Ling Lan's words made Li Yingjie's face darken completely, because he too had remembered his horrible manner back when he was young and ignorant. Ah, that would be an unshakeable stain for his whole life!

Ling Lan felt that she should not continue to bully this annoying-looking rich kid, who was really just a prideful tsundere little uke <sup>1</sup>, so she patted Li Yingjie lightly on the shoulder and said, "Frankly, we're all not suited to do this. In terms of family standing, none of our backgrounds are deeper than yours (Ling Lan secretly crossed her fingers behind her back at this), so only you are suited for this task. You will pull it off the best."

"Like Wu Jiong, his face is filled with righteousness. One look and you can tell he's from a regimented military family. Can you really ask him to act as an arrogant and unreasonable 2nd-generation ancestor <sup>2</sup>?" asked Ling Lan in return, pointing at Wu Jiong.

"Yes, Li Yingjie, you naturally possess that arrogant air required. No one can beat you. You should just make the sacrifice for our party." From Ling Lan's words, Wu Jiong could tell what his future image would be, so he quickly rushed to coax Li Yingjie. As his classmate for 10 years, he naturally understood Li Yingjie's weakness towards flattery.

Wu Jiong's words undoubtedly cheered Li Yingjie up immensely. Seeing the pleading and expectant faces of Qi Long and the others around the table, he sniffed haughtily and said impulsively, "Since you all begged so earnestly, I'll take one for the team and accept this responsibility then."

Seeing this side of Li Yingjie, Ling Lan could not bear to look straight at him, immediately turning her head away. This little fellow had been sold off and still he stayed to help his traders count their money <sup>3</sup> — how was he so adorkable <sup>4</sup>...

"Good luck!" Qi Long and the others all cheered energetically for Li Yingjie, which just made Li Yingjie even more eager to perform. "I'll let you all see what a true arrogant 2nd-generation ancestor is like. Watch and learn!"

Li Yingjie rolled up his sleeves and said to his team members, "Follow me. Let us go teach them a good lesson."

"Yeah!" shouted Li Yingjie's team excitedly. Those hanging around with Li Yingjie were pretty much all cut from the same cloth.

Looking at the unimaginably arrogant Li Yingjie, Ling Lan and the others collectively sweatdropped. Dammit, this fellow was just naturally born to be a rogue.

"Leader, how should we do this?" On their way, a team member asked Li Yingjie.

"How? Just go right up to them and teach them a lesson! Hit them however we want as long as it's not fatal. Remember, we are great arrogant rogues — anyone who rubs us the wrong way, we beat up!" said Li Yingjie with a fierce glare.

"What if someone stronger than us appears?" The team member was still uncertain. Mind you, the other side was also headed for the First Men's Military Academy, all exceptional characters from the respective scout academies. What if by some chance they ended up kicking a hard plate and failed in beating up the other to be beaten up instead?

"Don't you see that we have people behind us?" Li Yingjie pointed out the table behind them where Ling Lan was seated, "Do you think those new cadets will have someone stronger than Boss Lan?" Li Yingjie was currently extremely bold — if by any chance he could not handle things, wasn't there still Ling Lan and the others behind him?

Subconsciously, Li Yingjie had already considered Ling Lan and the others as a sturdy shield at his back. To be honest, he was not resistant towards Ling Lan's instructions; he was just a little displeased at Ling Lan's casual way of ordering him around.

Ling Lan understood Li Yingjie very well. She knew the other was an egotistical show-off who loved to be in the spotlight — this sort of role, especially, where he had to exert his dominance over others, was as easy as breathing for him.

Meanwhile, at this time, at a table on the outermost edge of the circle, two parties were locked in an argument.

"Wu Yong, don't you go too far." One of the Doha cadets seemed to know the person who had come to provoke them.

"Wu Pei, I'm going too far? If you hadn't set me up, would I have remained to study at a scout academy in planet Dorun?" said Wu Yong coldly, "Even so, I have still managed to enrol into the First Men's Military Academy. You cannot destroy me."



"That matter back then is all just your imagination. I have nothing to do with it. Since we have both gotten into the First Men's Military Academy, this is something worth celebrating. Why are you still here to seek trouble with me?" asked Wu Pei calmly.

"Because I have already wanted to beat you up 10 years ago. You just ran away too quickly, hurrying off to Doha, never returning in 10 years. Unexpectedly, I have finally bumped into you again today and can finally clear up our debt back then." Wu Yong continued, "Should I break your right hand? Or both your legs? I'll let you have a taste of my suffering back then."

Wu Pei's expression became frosty and he said warningly, "Wu Yong, you better not take things too far. These people here are all from Doha."

"Haha, will they act on your behalf? Aren't you the only one who was accepted into the First Men's Military Academy from that scout academy of yours?" Wu Yong knew everything regarding Wu Pei like the back of his hand.

"Seize him!" Wu Yong said to the companions by his side.

Just as those people were planning to seize Wu Pei, a haughty voice rang out, "Ho, who permitted you to bully my people?"

At this moment, Li Yingjie had already led his team members to the scene. Li Yingjie raised his jaw high, looking down with disdain at the other side. This obviously contemptuous expression made the rage on the faces of Wu Yong's party climb rapidly.

"He is not someone from your scout academy." Wu Yong forcefully tamped down on his anger, coolly warning Li Yingjie not to interfere needlessly.

"Hmph! Hasn't anyone told you that all of the people from Doha are under my protection?" These words of Li Yingjie were said with arrogance, but they received echoing support from the other academies from Doha, "Yes, we're all under his protection." Everyone knew that this was just Li Yingjie's excuse for butting in to help, so they all spoke up to accommodate him.

"Are all people from your Central Scout Academy so arrogant?" A cold glint glimmered in Wu Yong's eyes as he said sinisterly.

Li Yingjie did not respond, instead turning his head to ask the other students from the Central Scout Academy behind him, "Brothers, someone is saying that we're arrogant.

Should we not disappoint them then?"

"Yeah!" Quite a few of the Central Scout Academy students who were more combative all stood up and surrounded the group, seeming as if they were eager to begin fighting right now. This scene made Wu Yong hesitate, not daring to move recklessly, but he was unwilling to retreat just like that, so he asked curtly, "Can't you all be reasonable?"

Li Yingjie snorted and said, "You already said we were arrogant, and still you ask us to be reasonable? Are you stupid?"

Wu Yong choked on a breath, finally only managing to bite out, "You watch your step." This was a random threat issued out of helplessness, which was also meant to signify the end of this conflict. Any slightly reasonable person would not let the matter escalate further — the two sides involved would typically back off at this point and go their respective ways.

But who was Li Yingjie? He was an absolutely unreasonable and arrogant elite family princeling. The moment he heard the other's words, he became unhappy.

"Watch my step?" Li Yingjie chuckled darkly, "I would really like to see how you will make me watch my step, you bastard. Beat him!"

# Chapter 224

## The Deep Waters of the Military Academy!

Following this cry, Li Yingjie's team and those Central Scout Academy students whose fists were already itching for a fight leapt forwards, rounding up all ten or so students of the other group. The cafeteria became a complete mess, the group fight kicking off just like that.

Qi Long stared dumbfounded at the scene before him, mumbling to himself, "They really began fighting?" Truthfully, he had actually thought this conflict would be peacefully resolved.

Ling Lan rubbed her brow helplessly, her head beginning to ache slightly. This Li Yingjie was truly hard to control once his arrogance was in full swing... Still, this was good too. At least some of the new cadets who had been thinking of trying something against them would now think twice before bothering them.

"Wu Jiong, go and check in on Li Yingjie. Don't let him take things too far!" Ling Lan was worried that Li Yingjie would not be able to stop once his temper was running high, so she sent Wu Jiong off to wrap things up. Compared to Qi Long and the others, Wu Jiong had a better relationship with Li Yingjie.

Wu Jiong nodded to show he understood. However, what Ling Lan was worried about did not occur — Li Yingjie still remembered Ling Lan's instructions and was careful not to inflict any life-threatening injuries. Even so, Wu Yong and his party of about ten people all received heavy internal injuries. In the end, they had to be carted up to the starship headed for the First Men's Military Academy by the soldiers at the fortress, hence becoming one of the running jokes at the military academy.

This made those students bear a terrible grudge against the students from Doha. In the end, they even joined forces with those who opposed the Doha faction, adding a considerable amount of obstruction for Li Yingjie and the others. Of course, this would all take place in the future, so we won't talk about it here for now.

This scene was taken in fully by the group that had been observing Ling Lan from a corner.

"Zhou Ya, looks like you were right. This year's Doha is indeed not simple. We need to watch out for this person," said Wang Hui grimly, pointing at the flamboyantly arrogant Li Yingjie at the centre of the chaos.

Zhou Ya nodded, but his gaze was directed at the table Ling Lan was at. He had seen Li Yingjie leaving from that table — then, what sort of characters were the people at the same table with him?

Zhou Ya believed that all these people were definitely not simple. He even suspected that the one who truly had the strength to rally the other talented students to his side was not actually that arrogant youth, but was likely one of the others laying low at that table...

Zhou Ya swept his gaze across the group gathered there. He automatically skipped over Luo Lang and Ling Lan, the two weakest looking members, and his eyes landed squarely on that agreeable grinning face of Qi Long's. Was he the one? Doesn't seem like it... or perhaps him? Xie Yi's radiantly smiling face leapt into focus... or perhaps him? Han Jijyun's cold and stern face made Zhou Ya's irises narrow abruptly — he had sensed an invisible pressure pressing down on him...

"Zhou Ya, are you alright?" Wang Hui saw cold sweat appear abruptly on Zhou Ya's forehead, and could not help but exclaim in surprise.

Zhou Ya closed his eyes, calming himself down quickly. As if replying to Wang Hui, but also as if he were just talking to himself, he muttered, "I may have met my rival."

"What?" Zhou Ya had spoken so softly that Wang Hui had not heard him properly.

Zhou Ya smiled at Wang Hui and said, "It's nothing. Maybe I'm just too tired."

Zhou Ya's words made Wang Hui relax. Indeed, Zhou Ya had spent too much mental effort on handling things with those crew members on the ship previously. This was something that could not be helped — when one's strength was weaker than the opponent's, one could only make up for it with wit and intelligence.

Zhou Ya glanced once more at Han Jijyun and thought to himself: *Is that person their strategist? He looks like a real impressive character.* Zhou Ya knew very well that since they belonged to two different power factions, there would come a day when they would clash... he rallied his spirits and his eyes lit up — he, Zhou Ya, was not someone who was afraid of challenge!

As if sensing something, Han Jijyun swept his gaze around the cafeteria, but could not pin down that sense of being watched. He silently shook his head — could it be that he was being paranoid?



After the fight, the cafeteria fell silent once more. As the Doha contingent was greater in number, they dominated almost a large half of the cafeteria, while the students from the other planets were spread out across the other half, staring warily at the Doha party. In the interim, several more ships had arrived one after another. Finally, when the cafeteria was almost fully packed, the students received the notification that they were about to board a new ship and begin the new leg of their journey.

Under the lead of the fortress staff, Ling Lan and the others came to the boarding point of the new spaceship. They were instantly struck dumb by the formidable appearance of this new ship. It turned out that the spaceship this time was not disguised as a commoner spacecraft, but was a genuine military vessel, a patrol ship marked by the Federation.

At the helm of the patrol ship was a powerful long-range energy cannon, laser cannons spread out threateningly all over both flanks of the ship and its stern. In addition, there were two long-range interstellar guided missiles clipped to the belly of the ship, ready to attack any enemy from afar.

The spaceship's hull was also not something those small spaceships impersonating as public spaceships could compare to. In its entirety, it was three times larger than the 7th Bugle Call. This massive military vessel lounged in the spaceport, and in comparison to all the other short and small ships around it, it seemed even more grand and majestic.

Ling Lan did not know what kind of existence an interstellar mothership was, which was larger than regular starships by tenfold, but right now, this starship before her in its full glory awed Ling Lan, who once again felt her blood boil with excitement within her.

All of the cadets boarded the ship with awe and reverence, and then received some rules they had to follow within the starship. Perhaps the new cadets had been stunned into meekness by the majesty of the military vessel, or perhaps they were still traumatised by their experiences on the previous ship, for they did not dare to irritate

the soldiers on the ship, obediently waiting as instructed on the ship.

Ling Lan's party naturally did not want to cause any trouble this time; thus, the journey was smooth sailing all the way. Three days later, they successfully arrived at a mysterious and lovely planet.

Little Four had long contacted the mainframe on the military vessel in secret to find out the coordinates of their landing spot. He alerted Ling Lan to the fact that this place was yet another planet unmarked by the Federation. Ling Lan could not help but recall her first outing to planet Demonbeast and all its associated happenings. She shuddered in silence, plagued by the unshakeable feeling that something was going to happen here on this mysterious planet as well... She could only hope her luck was better this time, allowing her to peacefully live through these six years of life at the military academy.

The starship naturally could not descend straight through the atmosphere of the planet. It hovered in the spaceport in the outer space of the planet, where the excited students then transferred to a shuttle train which brought them to their actual destination —— Military Capital!

The screens on the train explained that this planet had only one human city, and that was Military Capital. There were only two kinds of inhabitants in Military Capital — one was military academy students, while the other was military men. That's right, the instructors of the First Men's Military Academy were actually soldiers and officers from various positions within the army.

The construction of Military Capital was very beautiful. The arrangement of its buildings was set according to the ancient Bagua <sup>1</sup> — without the relevant map, it would be very easy to get lost in the maze of buildings. The heart of Military Capital was a flower garden plaza, which took up a vast amount of land and was also extremely beautiful. To accommodate this location, there were no tall buildings around it, with only a few non-standard small buildings nestled among the trees.

You ask where the military academy was? In fact, the entire Military Capital was the military academy! Here, all the buildings were places where the students could study, rest, entertain themselves, or shop. The facilities of Military Capital were exhaustive — anything for eating, using, wearing, and even playing could be found here — never ever giving one the feeling that they were living in an enclosed world. Furthermore, the virtual world was openly accessible to the cadets at all times to log in and out as

they liked.

When Ling Lan's year of cadets stepped into Military Capital, she instantly noticed some cadets dressed in standardised uniforms staring at them strangely. Quite a number of them had even opened their communicators, as if contacting someone about their arrival. This raised Ling Lan's guard — could it be that these senior cadets wanted to show the new cadets their place?

Thinking about it, Ling Lan felt that this was a likely possibility, so she warned Qi Long, Wu Jiong, Li Yingjie, and the others to be a little more careful to not get separated from the others and give the older cadets a chance to act.

It looked like the waters of the First Men's Military Academy were pretty deep... Ling Lan notified Lin Zhong-qing and Xie Yi with a serious expression that they needed to swiftly find out more about the situation at the First Men's Military Academy, especially with regards to the various factions and their leaders.

Ling Lan thought silently: It looks like it wouldn't be as easy as she had thought to establish a foothold here in the First Men's Military Academy!

Of course, Ling Lan was not cowed by this — ever since she knew that Ling Xiao would be there behind her to support her and clean up any messes, Ling Lan had become much more daring than before.



In the garden of a particular villa in the 4th year dormitory district, four young men were idly playing cards.

One of them was very well-built, his strong square face filled with a fierce coldness. Even when playing cards, his demeanour was extremely serious, just as if he was currently embroiled in a huge mecha fight, filled with concentration.

Across from the well-built youth was an extremely handsome young man. However, this handsomeness was filled with a sense of perversity. Slightly narrowed eyes and a constant half-smile naturally made him ooze deviousness in others' eyes.

On the right-hand side of the youth with the devious air was an extremely plain-looking youth. However, his simple attire and appearance did not make him pale in

comparison to his uniquely striking companions. It was as though he were between two sparkling diamonds, but continued to emit his unique lustre as a luminous pearl, no weaker for the difference.

Meanwhile, across from the plain youth was a young man wearing a half-mask covering the top half of his face. His soft red lips always carried a beautiful curve, and the eyes behind his mask constantly emitted a warm sense of laughter. The aura around him was warm and welcoming, making others feel like getting close involuntarily. It should be said that the one who gave others the first impression of being harmless and friendly was unquestionably this youth.

"I heard that, an aberrant talent is coming from the Central Scout Academy of Doha this year?" The devious youth flicked at the cards in his hands, sharing some rumours he had heard with an intrigued expression on his face.

"Where did you hear that from?" asked the plain youth with a quirk of his brow.

The devious youth smiled slightly, "Who else but our old rival, that Zhang Jing-an who came from the Central Scout Academy. Ever since he lost to us, he has mentioned that the strongest aberrant prodigy of the Central Scout Academy will be coming to our military academy this year. It is impossible to forget!"

The well-built youth acted as though he had heard nothing, pulling out one of the cards in his hands seriously to place it on the table, and called out, "Jack!" Then, he turned to look at the masked youth and said, "Lanfeng, it's your turn now." He was not interested in this sort of rumour — if a strong mecha fighter appeared, perhaps he might pay more attention.

The warm youth abruptly collapsed the cards in his hands, and then said with a smile, "Zhao Jun, don't rush, the card will come out eventually." He slowly pulled out a card from the closed deck in his hands, lightly placing it on the table as he asked, "Han Yu, do you know who that is?"



# Chapter 225

## The Various Factions!

"I don't know. Zhang Jing-an has not said anything more!" replied Han Yu, "However, according to my sources, he will go pay a personal visit to that person today." He randomly drew a card from his hand and threw it onto the table, and then stroked his jaw and said, "I really want to know right now — if that aberrant prodigy really joins Zhang Jing-an's faction, who will be the true leader of the Doha Central Scout Academy faction?"

The plain youth smirked and said, "Zhang Jing-an has made a wrong move! If that person is truly as aberrant as he said, he will definitely not be able to suppress the other." That said he glanced at the cards on the table and said, "I pass on this round! Zhao Jun, it's your turn."

Zhao Jun looked at the cards and shook his head, signalling that he too could not play this hand, and gestured for the next player, Li Lanfeng, to play his card.

Li Lanfeng pulled out a card and placed it down, saying, "Well, you can't really say that. Perhaps he is willing to become the other's assistant..."

The plain youth glanced at Li Lanfeng and asked, "You think Zhang Jing-an is that broad-minded?"

Li Lanfeng closed up his cards, thinking seriously for a moment before saying admiringly, "Wei Ji, looks like you are still the one who understands Zhang Jing-an better!"

Wei Ji smiled, as if basking in Li Lanfeng's words. "I've been fighting him for 4 years. If I still don't understand him, would I still have the right to sit by your sides?"

Han Yu chuckled. Although the four of them came from different planets, ever since they entered the military academy, they had been working with each other to fight against the Doha faction. The collaboration among the four of them was integral to the current situation of being able to easily keep the Doha faction in check beneath them.

"That's why I say we still need to continue cooperating. We cannot let Zhang Jing-an find a chance to put on airs," said Han Yu.

Zhao Jun shrugged and said, "Leave me out of all this plotting and scheming. If a fight breaks out, just let me know then."

Wei Ji side-eyed him and said tonelessly, "We don't expect you to come up with any strategies anyway. All you need to do is fight."

Zhao Jun glared at him angrily, but just as he was about to say something, Li Lanfeng spoke up, "Zhao Jun is the best among us in terms of mecha piloting. If we don't rely on him for fighting, who should we rely on?" That said, he threw an admiring gaze at Zhao Jun, snuffing out the rage in Zhao Jun's heart instantly. He patted his chest firmly and said, "Don't worry, leave the fighting to me!"

Han Yu and Wei Ji shared a glance subconsciously, a trace of apprehension in their eyes. However, they soon regained their composure, one resuming his airy manner, the other still smiling as deviously as ever.

Li Lanfeng did not seem to detect the swift change in the two youths' eyes. He looked at Han Yu and Wei Ji with a warm smile and asked brightly, "Are we still playing?"

Han Yu threw the cards in his hands onto the table and stretched expansively. Only then did he stand up and say, "No, let's stop. Before figuring out the situation on Zhang Jing-an's side, I can't rest easy sitting here."

There were several cadets chatting not too far away. When one of them saw Han Yu stand up, he rushed over to say, "Leader?"

"Let's go!" said Han Yu to his team member.

"Leaving so soon? Busy?" Wei Ji frowned lightly and stood up as well. He did not really have much desire to leave, but since Han Yu was about to go, there was not much point in him staying behind.

Han Yu smiled and said, "I have to go arrange some of my people to keep watch on Zhang Jing-an... I have to find out how strong that aberrant even Zhang Jing-an respects is. I really do not want to let the Doha Central Scout Academy faction rise again!" It had taken them much effort to lead the planet Wuji factions to suppress the Doha factions — he had no intention to relinquish his position as the third in power.

Wei Ji nodded and said, "Then I'll go with you!" At this time, Wei Ji's team member had also run over, and the two youths left the villa with their respective team members.

Seeing their figures disappear from sight, Zhao Jun sniffed and threw down the cards in his hands. "D\*mn, really taking me as their hired thug now?"

Li Lanfeng also threw down the cards in his hands, a subtle smile on his face. "Since it's a cooperation, some price must be paid. It's fine as long as this price remains within our control."

Zhao Jun turned his neck from side to side, relaxing his body that was somewhat stiff from sitting too long. In a somewhat disgruntled tone, he said, "I really don't know why you chose to join them back at the start. Wouldn't it have been better to join forces with the number one and number two factions?"

Li Lanfeng shook his head and said, "Joining the number one and number two factions, we would not have any speaking rights. That would truly make us hired help... conversely, joining them — to protect their third position, they would definitely value us highly. We can only truly establish a foothold within the military academy with the speaking rights this affords us."

Zhao Jun knew that what Li Lanfeng said was not wrong. He glanced at Li Lanfeng worriedly and said, "But, they have still begun to fear you."

Li Lanfeng smiled and said, "It's fine. A lone wolf like me, even if they fear me the fear won't grow by much. It'll be okay as long as you don't act as if you're too close to me."

"You told me to pretend to be a simple-minded brawny character, while you're the mediating character between me and them. If I'm not close to you, who am I close to?" Zhao Jun huffed coldly. If he was not close with Li Lanfeng, then that would truly be suspicious.

"It's actually not a huge problem. As long as you act as impulsive and eager for a fight as usual, they will think it's very easy to control you, and hence not worry about me too much," said Li Lanfeng.

Zhao Jun harrumphed and said, "Right now in the military academy, who doesn't think of me as the impulsive and eager to fight Tyrant Zhao?"

Li Lanfeng laughed at these words. "Isn't that pretty good? Anyone who wishes to

avoid trouble will certainly avoid disturbing you, right?"

Zhao Jun fell silent for a long moment before opening his mouth to say, "When will we be able to go up against that Thunder King?"

Li Lanfeng paused, his entire being suddenly turning extremely cold and forbidding. However, this shift in his aura only lasted for a split second. In the blink of an eye, he had recovered his usual warm aura, and he articulated his answer word by word, "There will be a chance."

Zhao Jun peered intently at Li Lanfeng, and the bleak aggression about him grew thicker. "I'll be waiting!"

Right then, a light breeze swept through the garden, ruffling the hair of both youths. Warm and gentle, bleak and forceful — the two distinctly different types of aura melded surprisingly well together, without any sense of irregularity.



The first thing the cadets did upon entry to the military academy was to carry out all the registration procedures, collecting the uniforms prepared by the school and finding out where their dormitories were at the same time. The accommodation provided by the military academy were all stand-alone villas. Each villa could hold six people; Ling Lan's team very coincidentally were all arranged to stay in one villa.

Qi Long and the others were naturally very surprised by this — only Ling Lan knew that this was definitely the work of her dad. In order to prevent his daughter's gender from being exposed, Ling Xiao had pulled all strings to arrange for Ling Lan to live together with these followers of hers, in hopes that they would be able to protect Ling Lan.

Of course, Ling Xiao had only done this after doing a lot of private investigation — he knew Qi Long and the others greatly admired Ling Lan, and were the type of sworn brothers that would give their lives for Ling Lan. This put a somewhat sour taste in Ling Xiao's mouth even as he was proud of his daughter. He just kept having the feeling that this bunch of brats were here to steal away his precious daughter...

The students from Doha were pretty much distributed within the same district. During this registration period, Lin Zhong-qing and Xie Yi had used their own

individual abilities to take the opportunity to understand some things within the military academy, such as the distribution of power among the factions as well as the ranking situation.

Students from Doha made up the majority, but they were split up into various factions of different sizes, each unwilling to defer to another. Of these, Zhang Jing-an's faction was the largest, and could be considered the representative of the Doha Central Scout Academy faction. But even so, his faction was still firmly pressed down by three other large factions, unable to budge.

They were respectively the number one faction, the Leiting faction <sup>1</sup>, the number two faction, the Tianji faction <sup>2</sup>, and the number three faction, the Wuji faction <sup>3</sup>.

When they passed on this information to Ling Lan and the others, Qi Long was infuriated, thinking that Zhang Jing-an had disgraced all of the Central Scout Academy. Mind you, every year, the Central Scout Academy was the school which supplied the most number of successful applicants to the First Men's Military Academy in the entire Federation.

Ling Lan and Han Jijyun shared a glance, a trace of understanding in their eyes. Han Jijyun voiced a reminder, "Looks like, Zhang Jing-an will soon be coming to find us." He turned to ask Ling Lan, "Boss Lan, what should we do?" Collaborate or refuse him?

"Let him come!" Ling Lan did not state her stance just yet.

Han Jijyun's eyes glinted, as if understanding something, and he said nothing further. Seeing this, Qi Long and the others cleverly asked no questions. They had long learned that when Boss Lan and Han Jijyun were speaking, they would need to go through several twists to fully understand what was going on, so it would be pointless even if they asked.

Sure enough, just as Ling Lan finished washing up and was lounging on the living room sofa to rest, Zhang Jing-an came to visit. Being able to source Ling Lan's address at such short notice, Zhang Jing-an was still rather capable.

Zhang Jing-an had brought his few team members along; Qi Long had already been instructed by Ling Lan to let them in without giving them any trouble.

Seeing Ling Lan sitting on the sofa, Zhang Jing-an said with a smile, "Ling Lan, seeing that you managed to enrol into our military academy, I am extremely glad!"

At this moment, Zhang Jing-an no longer had any of the dejected air he had had after his failure at the grand armed melee that year. Although his faction was currently being suppressed by the other three major factions, he was still the leader of the fourth ranking faction after all. He appeared spirited, and even with a smiling face and a friendly attitude, he still retained a trace of the prideful air of a superior.

Zhang Jing-an's words and his attitude made a trace of displeasure appear on the faces of Qi Long and the others. They would not allow anyone to disrespect their Boss Lan. Even if Zhang Jing-an was their senior back then, they would not condone it.

Ling Lan only quirked a brow at his words, before pointing at the sofa before her and saying calmly, "Senior Zhang, please sit!"

Since Zhang Jing-an was treating her with the air of a superior, Ling Lan naturally needed to strike back. She immediately treated Zhang Jing-an like a subordinate follower, casually instructing him to sit.

This breezy attitude made the expressions of the team members who had come along with Zhang Jing-an to change. One of them was about to bark out a warning at Ling Lan when Qi Long abruptly swept an icy glare at him, harrumphing loudly.

This loud harrumph reverberated by his ears, and that person felt a jolt in his chest, his blood and vital energies roiling. The cry he had been about to utter seemed to become lodged in his throat, no longer able to come out. His expression changed drastically, and he stared in vacant shock at Qi Long who was standing beside Ling Lan...

Zhang Jing-an's expression changed as well, his initial haughty manner disappearing to be replaced by a share of grimness. He glanced at Qi Long with a complicated expression, and signalled for that team member to back down.

# Chapter 226

## New Cadet Regiment!

Zhang Jing-an walked over to sit on the sofa Ling Lan had pointed out. He did not say anything to Ling Lan, instead turning to Qi Long beside her to say with an admiring expression, "Junior Qi Long, you are the valedictorian among the new cadets joining us this year, bringing such glory to our Doha Central Scout Academy! This strength of yours is notable even among the upper ranks of the entire military academy. In future, you will definitely become a central pillar for our Central Scout Academy faction!"

On the surface, Zhang Jing-an was praising Qi Long, but he was in fact trying to plant a thorn in Ling Lan's heart. He wanted her to grow wary of Qi Long and become unable to trust Qi Long fully. Moreover, he also believed that as long as Qi Long was given a chance, with his strong capabilities, he would certainly be unwilling to continue deferring to Ling Lan! Zhang Jing-an believed that, with his abilities, he could definitely convince the simple-minded little Qi Long to join his faction.

Just now, Ling Lan's cold indifference had caused Zhang Jing-an to make the decision to give up on Ling Lan and choose Qi Long. Of course, to get what he wanted, he would need to create trouble between the two to cause Qi Long and Ling Lan to split up. This was also why Zhang Jing-an had praised Qi Long so highly — he was hoping to kindle Qi Long's desire for recognition, thus making him dissatisfied with Ling Lan.

However, Zhang Jing-an's idealistic calculations were destined to fail. As he lauded Qi Long, he carefully observed the changes in Qi Long's expression, but found that Qi Long did not react at all to his words. This made Zhang Jing-an's brow furrow, his heart becoming somewhat unsettled.

Ling Lan naturally knew what Zhang Jing-an was aiming for, but she was not at all concerned. She had already intended to push Qi Long up as a leader from the start — it was just that Qi Long was a battle maniac and had no interest whatsoever in this sort of things.

Zhang Jing-an saw the two of them ignoring his words, even sensing some mockery in Ling Lan's gaze, and could only sulkily stop his attempts at provocation. With stilted laughter, he said, "And Junior Ling Lan, I haven't seen you for a few years, but you're

still as spirited as ever." The few years he had spent in the military academy had obviously made Zhang Jing-an more mature and tolerant than when he had been at the scout academy.

Since it looked like Qi Long was a dead end, he had no choice but to pick Ling Lan again. Zhang Jing-an's intent shifted instantly, returning to his original target.

Ling Lan was expressionless, still retaining her slackface to say coldly, "Many thanks!"

This voice with no trace of warmth made Zhang Jing-an choke for a moment, only managing to squeeze out a smile after a long while. However, the smile still looked rather forced.

It should be said that Zhang Jing-an had not expected Ling Lan to be so discourteous to him, not even bothering with surface niceties. He had initially planned to use their relationship as senior and junior to close the distance between them and then suggest a partnership, but now it looked like this was impossible.

Thus, Zhang Jing-an went straight to the point. "New to the military academy, Junior Ling Lan, you likely still don't know how the distribution of power is right now in our military academy, right? If you want to pass your days securely in the military academy till you graduate, it won't do if you don't understand this."

Ling Lan quirked a brow and said, "Oh? There's such a thing?" If there was someone willing to voluntarily explain it to her, she naturally would not reject them. It was never wrong to try and understand things a little better.

"There are many factions of varying sizes within the military academy. There are about ten or so that are strong enough to be ranked, but, there are four strongest factions that stand out from the rest. They are respectively the first faction, Leiting, the second faction, Tianji, the third faction, Wuji, and our Doha Central Academy faction." At this point, a trace of regret appeared on Zhang Jing-an's face. "If the people from the other scout academies in Doha were willing to join us, we would never have ended up as the fourth faction. Even if becoming the first or second may be a bit difficult, third place should have been in the bag. Last year when we had a ranking mecha fight with the Wuji faction, we only lost by about 10 points at the end. What a shame..."

When Zhang Jing-an mentioned the third faction, his tone and demeanour were clearly disgruntled. He lifted his head to look at Ling Lan and said, "However, I believe this



year will be different. We can definitely take back the third position. I know there are a full 300 or so new cadets from the Central Scout Academy this year. As long as we unite and work together, even the position of second faction is worth trying for."

At this point in his speech, Zhang Jing-an was overcome with excitement. He could already almost see the glorious scene of him leading the students of the Central Academy faction strutting around the military academy.

However, Ling Lan's response instantly smacked him back into reality. Ling Lan could be heard to say calmly, "Senior Zhang's thinking is very admirable, but I personally dislike fighting and don't want to take part in this sort of thing. As for the other new cadets, Senior Zhang can go and try inviting them personally."

Ling Lan's words almost made Zhang Jing-an spew blood. He stared wide-eyed at Ling Lan, his face a picture of disbelief. What was he saying about disliking to fight... wasn't this person before him now the one who instigated that horrific grand armed melee back then?

Zhang Jing-an was about to say something when Ling Lan abruptly stood up and said, "It's been a long day. I'm already very tired. Forgive me for not being able to accompany you any further. Please help yourself, Senior Zhang!"

That said, Ling Lan turned and left the dining hall immediately to return to her own room, not giving Zhang Jing-an any chance at all to continue speaking or to try asking her to stay.

Watching as Ling Lan's figure disappeared, Zhang Jing-an's expression shifted slightly. He repressed the rage in his heart, turning his head to look at Qi Long and invited, "Is Junior Qi Long interested to contribute your strength to our Central Academy faction?"

Qi Long yawned widely, and waved his hand in refusal, saying, "We follow Boss Lan. If he's not interested, then we're not interested. Sorry about that, Senior Zhang! It's really too tiring. I too need to rest now. Bye!" So saying, he too left the hall, returning to his own room to rest.

Being outright rejected by the two strongest people in this year's intake from the Central Scout Academy, Zhang Jing-an could not bear to stay any longer. He resentfully said goodbye to Han Jijyun and the others and then swiftly made his way out of Ling Lan's villa.

"D\*mmmit, refusing a toast only to drink a forfeit <sup>1</sup>... does he really think this is still the time for him to have the wind and storm at his beck and call?" The moment he got back to his own villa, Zhang Jing-an flung a teacup from the tea set in his living room savagely against the ground. All the humiliation he had bottled up at Ling Lan's place was finally unleashed at this moment.

"Leader, what do we do next? Do we teach them a lesson?" One of his team members walked close to ask quietly. This was Zhang Jing-an's typical way of handling things — anyone who was unwilling to submit would be harassed by teams till they were forced to submit and joined his faction.

Zhang Jing-an's gaze flashed, a reckless urge rising in his heart to send some people to teach those few damn brats a good lesson. However, he very quickly got a hold of himself, knowing that right now was not the time. After all, the other new cadets had not joined his faction yet — if the others found out he had taught Ling Lan and his team a lesson just because they would not join him, those new cadets might grow wary and become unwilling to join.

Hmph! Wait till he got all of the new cadets into his fold, then he would most certainly teach them a lesson! Zhang Jing-an's gaze was venomous — till death he would not forget the humiliation he suffered in his final year at the scout academy. He would definitely take revenge for the grudge acquired back then.



The upper ranks of the other factions soon got wind of the news of Zhang Jing-an's failure. Some of them reacted with contempt, while some reacted with schadenfreude. However, they did not think much of this so-called strongest aberrant of the Central Scout Academy — even though they knew the valedictorian of this year's batch was from the Central Scout Academy, they still were not concerned. This was because there was a valedictorian every year, but the one who could truly become the strongest of the year within the military academy was oftentimes not that valedictorian.

Everyone thought that the Central Scout Academy faction would soon be embroiled in a power struggle between the old and new internal factions, but things were unexpectedly peaceful. Zhang Jing-an did not take any measures, while Ling Lan's side seemed to be focused on their studies, showing no signs of wanting to take power. This made all the various factions somewhat bemused — could it be that Zhang Jing-an could really tolerate this batch of disobedient new cadets?

Meanwhile, it was not that Zhang Jing-an did not want to take action, he just could not. Because he had been continuously trying to invite the other new cadets to join his faction over this period of time, but all he received were rejections. Although Zhang Jing-an had considered trying to force things from the weakest of the new cadets, he found that the bonds among this batch of new cadets were extremely strong. It was all too easy to spark off some unintended effect if he was not careful. This made Zhang Jing-an have no choice but to give up on this avenue of action. He could only tolerate for now and try to think of another way.

Ling Lan was naturally aware of the fact that Zhang Jing-an had been smacking into walls with the new cadets, because Wu Jiong, Li Yingjie, and the other team leaders had discussed this matter with her before.

Ling Lan had stated her decision outright, which was to stay neutral and observe for a year first. After all, their first year was the gruelling physical conditioning; they would not have any energy to participate in this struggle among the factions. When they moved on to the second year and the timing was right, then they could decide whether to join some other faction or create an organization themselves.

Ling Lan's words seemed to give these people direction, so they all decided to temporarily not join any faction either, putting all their focus into completing their training tasks. To prevent Zhang Jing-an and his faction from taking out his anger and frustration on them for not getting what they wanted, they temporarily established a new cadet regiment, supporting each other in their daily movements.

They did not ask for Ling Lan's opinion, directly promoting her as the first regiment commander, with Qi Long as the second regiment commander, Wu Jiong as the third, and Li Yingjie as the fourth. The position of fifth regiment commander would be filled by the other team leaders in turn to facilitate operations.

Ling Lan only found out about all this after the fact and was rendered extremely speechless! Mind you, she had told them to observe the situation for a year just so they would be able to establish their worth in the eyes of the other factions, and not so they could make their own organisation. Moreover, she did not want to be the first regiment commander of this new cadet regiment... hells, she really did not want to take on any such responsibility, alright?!

However, Ling Lan's face was currently already at the extreme slackface level, all emotions almost indiscernible from her expression. Thus, no matter how dissatisfied

she was with the situation, she could only emanate endless cold air to torment these idiot schoolmates who did not understand her true intentions.

Although Ling Lan's cold aura chilled these new cadets to the bone, every time they passed by Ling Lan and ended up shivering in their boots from this frigid air, they were ever more convinced in their decision: See, how formidable was their first regiment commander! With just one look, he could freeze them in their tracks. Under his lead, they would definitely be able to puff out their chests in pride within the military academy, holding their ground.

Heaven knows who revealed the establishment of the new cadet regiment to the other students from the other scout academies of Doha. These new cadets had experienced the great triumph of taking control of the spaceship under Ling Lan's leadership, and so were already fully convinced of Ling Lan's capabilities. As such, quite a significant number of Doha's new cadets also joined the regiment. Only an extremely small number of new cadets joined the other factions of Doha due to personal reasons.

With that, almost 500 new cadets joined the new cadet regiment. The decently sized organisation, not too big yet not too small, made the other factions step lightly in their oppression. If any major violence occurred, the military academy would step out to enforce punishment on all sides, so that would be disadvantageous to them too. Under these circumstances, the new cadets of the new cadet regiment temporarily obtained the space to exist freely...

# Chapter 227

## New Cadet District!

"Requesting login to the virtual world. Requestor: Ling Lan, age 16 years. Requirements for login fulfilled. Please wait a moment!" Logging into the great hall, Ling Lan finally saw this approval notification. This was because Ling Lan had not participated in the barrier-crossing mission when she had been 13 years old, so her true identity could only officially enter the real virtual world after she turned 16 years old.

Of course, Ling Lan was already long familiar with the real virtual world. The only reason she was using her real identity now to login was that Qi Long and the others wanted her to enter the virtual world and join the exciting world of mecha.

Ling Lan's login spot was the camping grounds of the First Men's Military Academy. However, this camping ground was only accessible to cadets; outsiders had no way of entering. There was a mecha training hall inside the camping grounds itself — as long as one could graduate from the test there, they would be able to enter the mecha world.

The moment she stepped into the mecha training hall, she came to the hall where one chose their beginner mecha. The same handsome soldier stood there as before, along with those three basic mecha. She had just approached when the soldier spoke up to ask, "Recruit, do you want to first understand more about the combat styles of the three mecha, their controls, or do you just want to choose a mecha directly?"

This time, Ling Lan naturally chose to select her mecha immediately. Perhaps out of habit, she actually chose the option of bestial mecha. Before Ling Lan could regret her choice, the soldier waved expansively, and the large spin wheel which had snubbed Ling Lan once appeared before her once more.

Seeing this familiar large spin wheel, Ling Lan could not help but sweatdrop. Tenaciously, she asked, "Can't I just choose directly?"

"A beginner's mecha is gifted by the system. So, a beginner has no right to choose the mecha. Which mecha model they get will be determined randomly by this spin wheel.

Luck, is also a form of strength. You should anticipate your luck and hope it brings you a strong and powerful mecha!" The soldier was still reciting the same script as before, each word exactly the same.

Ling Lan could not help but direct a middle finger at the sky, full of contempt for the system's rigidity. Unexpectedly, this action of hers actually caused the soldier's expression to turn stern and he issued a warning, "The recruit behaves disrespectfully to the soldier. Luck value deducted by 100!"

Ling Lan almost spewed blood — the system was truly brutal.

Eagerly, Little Four asked quietly within the mindscape, "Boss, do you want me to erase this punishment?"

Ling Lan immediately stopped Little Four. After all, she was using her true identity to login. Who knew whether this area was being monitored, or if there would be some record left behind of the proceedings? Besides, it was only her luck value that was being deducted. At most, when she was choosing a mecha, her luck would be bad enough to end up with a most terrible mecha. With her current abilities, even the worst mecha would not have its battle power reduced by much.

After consoling Little Four, Ling Lan resolutely spun the large spin wheel. In her mind, she was thinking — with such low luck value this time, she should not obtain a rabbit mecha again, right? It should be known that that rabbit was still one of the newer mecha developed by the Federation, so its combat power was actually above average.

So thinking, Ling Lan heard a 'poof'. Colourful confetti swirled before her eyes, and an extremely adorable giant rabbit abruptly appeared before her...

D\*mmmit, why was it still a rabbit?! Wasn't it said that the rabbit was one of the newer models to be developed by the Federation, only able to be drawn if one's luck was great? Ling Lan still remembered what the soldier had said back when she had first drawn the rabbit — he had smiled and commended her for her luck. Today, her luck had dropped by 100, and she still drew the rabbit? What the hell was this?

The soldier saw the rabbit mecha appear, and his face revealed a smile filled with schadenfreude. "Congratulations, recruit, on obtaining our Federation's newest rabbit mecha model." He raised his hand to pass the remote control for the rabbit mecha to Ling Lan.

At this moment, Ling Lan really wanted to slap herself a few times — *why did you have to choose bestial mecha, why did you have to even think of rabbit, now reality has really conjured it up...* with a bitter expression, she accepted the remote control. D\*mmmit, she really did not want to meet up with Qi Long and the others controlling a rabbit mecha!

Just imagine it... a cold-faced unsmiling youth, operating an adorable rabbit mecha, and when the rabbit mecha paused, it would even nibble every once in a while on a carrot... Oh my god! She felt completely unwell, almost being able to imagine how Qi Long and the others would be bowled over with laughter...

But to change to a new mecha, one needed a massive amount of points. Moreover, the points of the mecha training hall were extremely difficult to accumulate — the points needed to switch to a new mecha required a long period of foundational control training to gather, and right now, what Ling Lan lacked most was time. Qi Long and the others were waiting for her in the mecha world — she needed to enter as soon as possible to meet up with them.

She might as well go to the mecha world and take part in the mecha arena fights. As long as she did not lose, it was relatively easy to collect points there to redeem a higher level mecha in the shortest period of time! Ling Lan decided that she would not contact Qi Long and the others right away after she entered the mecha world. Let her switch her mecha first.

Ling Lan boarded her rabbit mecha and immediately chose to take the assessment. With regards to mecha, the mecha she was most familiar with was most likely the rabbit mecha. The moment the controls were in hand, Ling Lan instantly found her groove, controlling the rabbit mecha just as if it were an extension of her limbs.

In order not to reveal too much, Ling Lan suppressed her hand speed, slowing things down by a full three brackets. Still, even so, her final results were good enough to place her within the top ten. Ling Lan decisively chose to remain anonymous; she did not want to be targeted by unknown enemies.

The assessment ended, and the same phrase popped up — do you want to graduate and leave — and this time, Ling Lan naturally chose yes.

The screen of her mecha turned white, and when the image stabilised once more, she was already in another world. Ling Lan knew that this was the mecha world. Ling Lan had been here before. However, at the time she had not taken a close look before

logging off, in a hurry to return to the learning space to assimilate the insights she had gained during the assessment. After that, she had not used that fake identity to log in again, so she was unclear on the situation in the mecha world.

The scene depicted on the screen was that of a desolate wasteland, as if the world had been through armageddon. There were overturned buildings and crumbling walls — ruins everywhere without a person in sight.

At this time, a block of text emerged on the mecha's screen. "Welcome to the mecha world. Your login number is SH291786907R9. We recommend you personalise your username."

Heh, this number was really very long. It was clear to see just how many people there were in the mecha world. They could be professional mecha operators from the military, or they could be simple mecha enthusiasts, or perhaps mecha experts from the general public...

Ling Lan knew that the serial number was not suitable for interaction. She needed to pick a name that would be easy to recall and easy for her companions to use in conversation. Of course, this name needed to carry the words 'Lingtian <sup>1</sup>', because Qi Long that punk had chosen to name their team as the Lingtian Battle Clan <sup>2</sup>... this fearless fellow — naming the team so arrogantly, drawing hate.

Ling Lan randomly chose [ Lingtian First-String <sup>3</sup> ]. Surprisingly, it was accepted straightaway — this truly made her doubt whether her luck had truly been docked by 100 <sup>4</sup>... Or maybe her luck was currently already nature-defying, so it would not matter no matter how much it was deducted?

Ling Lan shook her head uncomprehendingly and decisively threw aside her doubts. She began to browse through the indicated missions on her screen. Right now, she was standing in the wasteland area which all newbies needed to challenge. There would definitely be some hint here telling you where the nearest town where humans gathered was. You would be able to leave if you found the hint, but if you couldn't, you would be stuck here forever. Even if you died, you would still be revived here in this wasteland.

Many newbies would be stuck here for quite a long while. For one, it cultivated the observational skills of the newbies, and secondly, it would also polish the newbies' mecha control. Before they reached a certain standard, they would not be allowed to



enter the true mecha world.

This was because even if they managed to enter the mecha world before their skills were up to snuff, they would still end up being bullied and kicked around, and not be able to improve. There were many newbies who used shortcuts to enter the mecha world, and then voluntarily withdrew due to being unable to progress further, losing the courage to operate mecha in the end.

Ling Lan randomly chose a direction and began walking. Here, it was wasteland on all four sides. The first direction chosen would obviously be just trying one's luck, so Ling Lan did not bother wasting brain cells over it.

After swiftly disposing of two waves of mutated rodents, Ling Lan found a hint. It looked like the path to the human town was underground, but it was unfortunately taken over by a large swarm of mutated rodents. To leave this place, she would need to clear out the entire batch of mutated rodents.

According to the average newbie's abilities, a newbie would have to wait until more people gathered here on this map to form teams and collaborate. But who was Ling Lan? Even if she had been given the rabbit mecha which was best at acting cute, this task posed no difficulty for her. She naturally would not choose to wait, immediately controlling her rabbit mecha to invade the underground tunnel.

Right at that moment, a humanoid mecha just happened to log onto this space. He had just appeared when he saw a large rabbit nibbling on a carrot hopping merrily into the underground tunnel. He was about to yell out for the other to stop, but found that the other had already disappeared...

"That's just asking for it! The rabbit mecha is one of the mecha with the least fighting power. Can one person overcome the overwhelming swarm of mutated rodents?" The humanoid mecha operator shook his head, prepared to wait for the other to revive and then get him to wait together for more teammates.

Three minutes went by, and the rabbit mecha still had not appeared at the revival area. The humanoid mecha exclaimed in surprise, "He's unexpectedly capable, actually holding out for so long..."

Five minutes went by, and still the revival area was still and silent. The humanoid mecha began to frown — could it be the other had become afraid and chosen not to

revive?

Ten minutes went by, and still there was no sign of the rabbit mecha's reviving figure. The humanoid mecha began to fidget — what in the world had happened?

When twenty minutes had passed and the rabbit mecha still had not revived. The humanoid mecha could hold back no longer, "If I die, I die. I need to see what has happened..."

Decision made, the humanoid mecha moved to dash into the underground tunnel. The moment he entered, he saw the ground littered with the corpses of mutated rodents. Zooming in on the image of the dead rodents, he could immediately see that all the rodents had been killed with one strike, never requiring a second blow. Each strike had been clean and efficient, as if having been calculated by a computer. Not a share of energy wasted, not a share of energy less than what was needed.

"What amazing attack skills!" The humanoid mecha sped up, and the further in he went, the more corpses of mutated rodents he found. By the time he got to the centre point, the corpses of the mutated rodents were stacked in towering heaps. In these numbers, even though he knew they were just dead carcasses, the humanoid mecha could not help but feel mentally creeped out...

# Chapter 228

## The Adorkable Rabbit Mecha!

"This definitely isn't something a newbie can do. Who the heck is he? Who exactly is the operator of that rabbit mecha?" The humanoid mecha was currently overcome with shock and awe, beginning to guess at the other's background.

Right then, something stirred abruptly behind the humanoid mecha.

"Squeak squeak squeak..." These sounds were transmitted from a distance. Although they were extremely soft, the powerful sound systems of the mecha had still captured them accurately.

These were the cries of the mutated rodents! The humanoid mecha operator's face paled drastically, and he shouted, "Not good! It's time for the mutated rodents to respawn... run!"

The humanoid mecha knew without having to think about it that the road he had taken to come here was certainly already blocked off. His only option was to speed up and move forwards for any hope of survival. If he was luckier, he might even be able to break past the newbie area and enter the human town.

The humanoid mecha decisively revved his engines to the max, zooming forwards speedily...

The sounds behind him were getting increasingly louder — the chaotic cacophony from behind him proved that there were countless mutated rodents on his tail. Sweat poured in a steady stream from the forehead of the humanoid mecha operator, flowing down into his eyes.

Real sweat carried the taste of salt, and the mecha world faithfully reflected this — the operator felt his eyes stinging from his sweat. However, he did not dare to wipe them away nor to even blink, afraid that any slight pause or hesitation would allow the endless swarm of mutated rodents behind him to chase up to him, making him end up as their gourmet meal...

The mutated rodents in the wastelands were extremely powerful — their claws and teeth were their weapons, easily tearing through the metallic outer shells of mecha. Such a vast amount of mutated rodents behind him would be able to consume him entirely in an instant. Thus, the moment he was surrounded, there would be practically no hope of survival — death would be certain...

The mecha's screen suddenly indicated that there was a signal coming from ahead, a distance of about 100 metres. Was it the exit? Hope flared in the humanoid mecha operator's eyes. He kicked his mecha's engines up another notch — in other words, the mecha's engines were currently operating beyond capacity. But for the sake of living on, this was a natural choice.

80 metres, 50 metres... there was a turn up ahead — what was that flashing light? Could it be a portal?

The humanoid mecha operator's eyes were filled with hope. As long as he could charge through this portal, he would be able to enter the human town and leave this newbie wasteland behind. He must do his best now!

30 metres... success was in sight! The humanoid mecha operator's face was filled with joy. He had never expected that he would be able to leave the newbie area so quickly. Perhaps he would break the record, becoming the fastest recruit to break through into the human town?

At this moment, a violent 'bang' suddenly rang out in this eerie and silent underground tunnel. The humanoid mecha operator felt his mecha being struck forcefully by an external force, his initially swiftly flying mecha being thrown off course by this collision...

No, he could not fail like this! The humanoid mecha operator's expression was twisted in a fearsome rictus as he desperately tried to stabilise the mecha's body. Still, his mecha finally fell to the ground, and with a trip, it stumblingly continued to run forwards. There were only 10 metres left — he just needed another 3 seconds, no, just 1 second would do, and he would be able to leave this horrific underground tunnel behind...

However, the time he yearned for was not bestowed by the heavens. Another loud sound of collision rang out — he was hit by a second attack. Yet another mutated rodent had slammed into him viciously, and the attack this time threw the humanoid

mecha completely off-balance. It was sent flying to fall right before the portal...

Just one more metre and he would be able to touch the portal, but unfortunately he would no longer have the chance... the endless swarm of mutated rodents behind him leapt on him without mercy, submerging the humanoid mecha, and then the cruel sounds of crunching teeth filled the tunnel...

No! The mecha operator looked despairingly at the portal right before his eyes... and then his screen turned black. This was because the mutated rodents had fully covered all his cameras with their bodies. An instant later, he received an alert — do you choose to revive? Fearing that the operators would suffer mental trauma from the various sufferings before death, the system by default would set the effect from pain and death to zero in the mecha world.

The operator grimaced and pressed the button to confirm. When the mecha's screen lighted up once more, he had already been returned to the revival point of the wastelands. The humanoid mecha operator was currently extremely frustrated and regretful. If he had only entered the tunnel a minute earlier, no, if he had only entered a second earlier, or perhaps had not stopped to look at those rodent bodies, choosing to run at full speed, he would not be here right now. Instead, he would be in the human town district, truly entering the exciting world of the mecha world...

The chance only came once; it was gone if you missed it. Now, to get through the newbie area, he could only wait for more companions to cooperate with him to fight through the tunnel.



Ling Lan, who had already arrived at the human town could not know that such a thing had happened behind her, that a humanoid mecha operator had almost managed to sweep past the newbie area by riding on her coattails. Right now, she had just received a system notification telling her that she had broken the record for being the fastest to enter the human town. The system asked her whether to publish her name or remain anonymous, and Ling Lan naturally chose to remain anonymous. Still, she scorned the mecha world system for being miserly, not even awarding a prize for breaking the record...

She looked over a map and found the mecha combat challenge hall. Unexpectedly, when she requested entry, she was denied because she did not have enough points,

thus not even having the right to enter to spectate in the challenge hall...

Only then did Ling Lan realise that the minimum requirement to enter the mecha challenge hall was 10 points. Every time you entered the hall, whether or not you spectated, you would be deducted 10 points. This was an absolutely tyrannical rule!

As for taking part in a mecha challenge, even the most basic level trainee mecha challenge fight would require 1000 points. In short, for Ling Lan to enter and make a successful challenge, it was impossible without at least 1010 points.

Ling Lan glanced at her personal information. In the column tallying her points, a large '0' stared back at her. Right now, she had absolutely no hope of entering the challenge hall; her main priority now was to find a way to quickly accumulate these 1010 points.

Frankly, Ling Lan was only in these dire straits because she had not gone through foundational training. As long as one took things step by step and completed the set series of foundational training till they passed, and if they did not use any points to redeem other types of mecha, 1000 points were basically a confirmed thing. Every newbie would have accumulated that much by going through the normal process. If anything was to blame, it was what an oddball Ling Lan was. Having already been through foundational training long ago, she of course would not go through it again, which was why she did not have this basic point accumulation.

*"What should I do now? How can I get these points as soon as possible?"* Thinking deeply, Ling Lan reflexively set the rabbit mecha into preset control mode. The rabbit mecha was thus seen to sit in place, nibbling on the carrot in its front paws as its head twitched.

This cute and adorkable appearance turned the heads of all the mecha passing by. Several female mecha operators were even stunned into stopping, eagerly watching the extremely adorkable rabbit mecha. Some desire even stirred in their hearts to maybe try and redeem a similar rabbit mecha for themselves.

Ling Lan was oblivious to the fact that she had become the focus of attention. Right then, she was asking Little Four, "Little Four, have you found the relevant data?" Whenever Ling Lan was at a loss, the all-capable Little Four would be brought into play.

"Boss, I've found it! There's a mission hall here where you can accept missions. Once

you complete the missions, you will be able to get a certain amount of points." Little Four was very reliable, very quickly finding a course of action.

"What kinds of missions are there? Which of them will give me more points, and are more suitable for me to do?" Ling Lan continued to ask.

"The missions include the standard system missions, special missions, limited-time missions, as well as player-assigned missions. The standard missions from the system tend to be more troublesome and take more time, but are pretty easy. However, the points they give are also relatively little. They are more appropriate for beginner level recruits for practice. As for the system special missions, that would depend on the mission you accept. Sometimes the points awarded will be very high, but there are also times where the points awarded can't even compare to that of the standard missions. For the limited-time missions, things are unclear. It seems to be associated with luck. If your luck is good, you'll get more points, while if you're unlucky, you may even get no points for your effort. As for player-assigned missions, they are typically harder and more difficult to complete. In contrast though, they tend to give much more points than those missions provided by the system. Most strong players will choose this type of missions."

Listening to Little Four's explanation, Ling Lan first eliminated standard missions and limited-time missions from her consideration. Like Little Four said, standard missions required too much time for little gain, which made them unsuitable for her situation of needing to accumulate 1010 points in a short amount of time. Meanwhile, limited-time missions required particular levels of luck, and she had just had 100 points deducted off her luck value. Who knew if her final point gain would be influenced because of that?

Right now, the missions that suited her purpose were only the system's special missions and the player-assigned missions. Ling Lan could only hope that her luck was better, that she would be able to find a high point mission that could be completed quickly. Er, why did this seem to have something to do with luck again?

Having decided, Ling Lan operated her rabbit mecha to go to the mission hall. She did not know that a video of her rabbit mecha had already been recorded by some busybody and uploaded to the shared highlights of the mecha world, letting everyone know that an extremely adorkable rabbit mecha had shown up in the remote Three-Seas Town <sup>1</sup>...



Somewhere else in the mecha world, in the extremely lively and bustling large plaza of Dunhuang City <sup>2</sup>, two humanoid mecha were currently patiently waiting for their other teammates to gather. The blue-white humanoid advanced mecha suddenly cackled audibly, causing the equally advanced red mecha beside him to jump in fright. He could not help but speak up to ask, "Zhao Jun, why are you laughing so creepily?"

"I'm laughing that someone who loves rabbit mecha as much as you has finally appeared in the mecha world. Of course, he's even more ostentatious than you are, directly operating a rabbit mecha into the mecha world..." cackled Zhao Jun.

"What's so strange about that? Don't all recruits have a certain probability of drawing a rabbit mecha?" asked the red mecha.

"But when they enter the mecha world, 99% of rabbit mecha users would definitely change their mecha into some other type of mecha. There are almost none who can persist and keep using a rabbit mecha," said Zhao Jun, "Of course, I've also not seen someone with a rabbit mecha complex quite like you <sup>3</sup>. Even the core mecha in your mecha space has been set to a rabbit mecha..."



# Chapter 229

## Accepting a Mission!

Every time this notion popped into Zhao Jun's mind, he would find himself extremely baffled. It should be known that one's core mecha should be the strongest mecha among all the mecha one possessed. Yet, his good friend, Li Lanfeng, went against the grain, choosing the weakest rabbit mecha as his core mecha. What hidden charisma did the rabbit mecha have? Enough to cause Li Lanfeng to be so fond of it, to the extent that he would do such an insane thing?

In response to his good friend's questions, Li Lanfeng was as unforthcoming as usual.

Zhao Jun was already used to it by this point, and so did not really expect Li Lanfeng to suddenly have a fit of kindness and tell him his thoughts. He casually continued to say, "Lanfeng, that rabbit mecha operator's abilities seem to be pretty good. Even in standby mode, he has set the rabbit mecha to rest in an extremely cute manner. Twitching its head and nibbling on a carrot, very interesting!"

Li Lanfeng jerked. "What?"

Zhao Jun sad, "Huh?"

"What did you just say?" Li Lanfeng did not seem to have heard what Zhao Jun had to say clearly, asking him to repeat himself.

Zhao Jun racked his brains to think back on what he had said, and then offered somewhat uncertainly, "About that rabbit mecha being interesting? How its standby action is to twitch its head and nibble a carrot?" Was this what he had said earlier?

Li Lanfeng only responded to this after a long while. "That is indeed very interesting!"

Zhao Jun glanced dubiously at Li Lanfeng. His good friend's voice sounded a little hoarse — could it be that he had caught a cold from enjoying the breeze with him last night? Zhao Jun suddenly felt guilty. If he had not been so restless, he would not have pulled Li Lanfeng along with him to the top of the high tower to enjoy the night breeze.

Li Lanfeng did not know what Zhao Jun was thinking. Inside his mecha's cockpit, his gaze became unfathomable, as if he were recalling something.



At this moment, Ling Lan had long arrived at the mission hall, and was currently resting with her eyes closed. Of course, she was not killing time — it was just that there was already a diligent little worker Little Four helping her sift through the hundreds and thousands of available missions to pick those most suited for her. Leaving Little Four to it was clearly much more professional and efficient than if she were to do it herself.

Like right now, it had only been 30 seconds when Little Four's smug voice rang out within her mindscape. "Boss, I've found it."

"What do you have?" said Ling Lan with an approving expression as she stroked Little Four's head.

Little Four was all smiles as he basked in his boss's affection, replying, "There is only one player-assigned mission, while there are three special missions from the system. They all suit us very well, and don't seem to require much time or effort. Of course, the points given are also not bad." With a wave of his hand, a sheet of white paper appeared in Little Four's hand, which he then passed to Ling Lan. Little Four felt that the information was too detailed to explain clearly, so he decided to just use text to display what he had found.

Ling Lan accepted the paper and saw the following written on it:

*Special System Mission:*

*1) Find the missing 'starlight conversion power core' of Three-Seas Town, allowing Three-Seas Town to possess night-time defensive ability! Reward — 1 mecha starlight conversion power core (equipment adapted for mecha use); 500 points.*

*2) One week later, Three-Seas Town shall be the target of a coordinated attack by the mutated beasts of the wildlands. The mayor of Three-Seas Town received the news, and in order to save the town, he has requested you, warrior, to bring a letter to the mayor of Suncreed City<sup>1</sup>, in hopes that the other can send some elite troops to come and help defend the town... Reward — 1 Supreme Frost Moon Battle Sword (equippable back*

*weapon for mecha); 200 points.*

*3) On the only road between Three-Seas Town and Suncreed City, a horde of mutated savage beasts have appeared. Three-Seas Town has issued a generous bounty for their elimination! Reward — 1 low-level mecha evolution stone (adds a certain degree of success when modifying lower mecha); 1 high-performance beam gun (equippable right-hand weapon for mecha); 200 points.*

*Player-assigned Mission:*

*An advanced mecha warrior requested to escort the client safely inside Suncreed City. Completion reward: 1 mecha repair toolkit (perfectly repairs any mecha below advanced mecha level once); 1 application of emergency repair (temporarily restores an intermediate mecha with damage of 60% and above back to perfect condition, time duration 1 minute! If used when damage level is below 60%, condition is only restored by 35%! Percentage of restoration will decrease in correlation with lowered damage levels); 200 points.*

Ling Lan flicked a finger at the paper and said, "Your meaning is to accept all four missions together?" 1100 points in total — that would cover the minimum requirement of 1010 points for the mecha challenge hall.

"Yes," replied Little Four decisively.

"Why? The second and third system's special missions and the player-assigned mission do seem related, so it makes sense to accept them together. But the first system mission... I just can't see how it relates to the other missions." commented Ling Lan with a frown.

Little Four chuckled gleefully, "Other people might of course not know the secret behind this, but who am I? A large-scale search is indeed very difficult, but this small-scale search is no trouble for me. The starlight conversion power core is actually in the main nest of the savage beasts. We should just pick it up along the way and bring it together to the mayor of Three-Seas Town to collect the reward."

Ling Lan cuffed Little Four lightly on the back of his head, "Smart aleck, accept them all then."

Little Four said smugly, "I've already done so! I was afraid if I waited, someone else would take them first."

Looking at Little Four's 'praise me, praise me!' expression, Ling Lan could not help but sweatdrop. This little brat was beginning to get too full of himself again — this called for some discipline... and so, she fiercely pinched Little Four's chubby little cheeks.

Over Little Four's cries for mercy, Ling Lan asked, "How do we contact that player?"

Little Four escaped from Ling Lan's demon fingers with great difficulty, and rubbing his brutalised cheeks mournfully, he said, "He will contact us on his own."

Right at that moment, the A.I. of Ling Lan's mecha suddenly sounded an alert. [No Mecha Unrepaired] requesting communications, YES or NO?

Little Four hurriedly shouted, "That's him!"

Ling Lan pressed the button to accept, and instantly heard a feeble voice say, "Excuse me, are you the one who accepted my mission?"

Ling Lan said calmly, "Yes!"

"This mission is to Suncreed City. The savage beasts there are very powerful; it's impossible to pass if you're not an advanced mecha warrior. I would like to ask, are you an advanced mecha warrior?" The other did not seem to have a lot of confidence in Ling Lan, and could not help but give a warning.

"Since I accepted your mission, I will definitely send you to your destination. You don't have to worry." Ling Lan looked at the rabbit mecha representing trainee status and her face was dark. This mecha truly did not have much persuasive power.

The other seemed to glean Ling Lan's connotation from her words, and so said, "Then I'm afraid I can't give you this mission. A while earlier, three intermediate mecha warriors accepted this mission together, and still they did not manage to pass..." As if thinking of something, he added, "The more people are involved in this mission, the more savage beasts there are, which makes it even harder. Trying to power through with sheer numbers is useless in the mecha world; individual ability is all that matters here."

Hearing this, Little Four immediately said, *"Boss, do you want me to help you create an illusion, making your mecha look like an advanced mecha to the other party?"*

The corner of Ling Lan's lips quirked. *"No need. I will use my strength to prove that this*

*mission is mine to complete."* Glancing at Little Four, Ling Lan reminded once more, *"Little Four, you must remember, right now I am using my real identity. So, anything involving the outside world cannot be manipulated. Don't let anyone discover your existence."*

Startled, Little Four quickly nodded his head and said, *"Understood, Boss!"*

Ling Lan ruffled his hair and said, *"You must be careful with your actions in the future. I cannot lose you, Little Four!"* The emphasised concern in her tone made Little Four's eyes turn red. He hurriedly nodded emphatically, mentally reminding himself not to let his boss worry anymore. Boo hoo hoo, so this is what Boss's care and concern was like. There was a sweet and sour feeling in his heart, but he was energised by it! No, he couldn't take it anymore, his core chip seemed to be a little overheated...

Ling Lan did not sense Little Four's reaction to her words. Currently, all her attention was on [No Mecha Unrepaired] as she responded coolly, "Even for advanced mecha warriors, if their control skills are not up to par, they still will not be able to complete the mission. Besides, to find an advanced mecha warrior in this Three-Seas Town is most likely very difficult." Along the way, Ling Lan had observed that this area was basically a mecca for trainee mecha and lower mecha; there were very few intermediate mecha, and as for advanced mecha, Ling Lan had not seen even one.

Ling Lan's words made the other choke, because what Ling Lan said was the truth. Setting aside the question of whether advanced mecha warriors would appear in Three-Seas Town, just looking at the reward the client was offering, he would not be able to attract any advanced mecha. He could only hope for an advanced mecha who just happened to be on his way to Suncreed City to accept his mission as a matter of convenience. He could never have imagined that Ling Lan was in fact accepting his mission precisely because it was conveniently along her way for her other missions...

"Instead of waiting indefinitely for an unknown possibility, you might as well take a gamble on me. Of course, you can first take a look at my combat ability. If you still think it's no good, it won't be too late to reject me then," Ling Lan continued to say.

Ling Lan's suggestion convinced the other, who replied, "What you say makes sense. Let me see your combat ability first then. If it's fine, I'll give this assignment to you. Let's do this, let's meet at the town's western gate."

Ling Lan naturally agreed to this. It was necessary to pass through the western gate of

the town on the way to Suncreed City anyway, so the other's suggestion would not waste too much of either of their time.

However, Ling Lan did not let Little Four go just because of this. She rapped Little Four sharply on the back of his head, causing Little Four to look at her in confusion, unsure why Boss was hitting him for no reason again.

"This doesn't count as troublesome? A waste of time?" Ling Lan threw an icy glare at Little Four, scaring him so much that he could only bow his head timidly, muttering in a small voice only he could hear, "Isn't this because you, Boss, are unwilling to let me manipulate things..." His final thought that this was all Ling Lan's own fault remained unsaid, as no matter what, Little Four would not dare to give voice to it, only able to forcefully swallow it back into his gullet.

With a 'whack', Little Four's head was given another firm cuff. Tears bloomed from Little Four's two eyes, and he glanced at Ling Lan in complaint. *Boo hoo hoo, Boss, why are you bullying me again?*

"It's my own fault?" said Ling Lan with a half-smile as she stared at Little Four. That stare made Little Four's entire body feel cold — how had he forgotten that his and Boss's minds were connected? Even if he did not voice that thought, Boss would still know about it...

Little Four was indeed very shameless; he immediately said with an innocent look, "Boss, never, definitely not, you must have heard wrong. No, no, no, sensed wrong!" Feeling as if this was not persuasive enough, Little Four suddenly said with an enlightened expression, "Ah... it must definitely be an invasion of an unidentified virus! Little Four must go kill the virus! Boss, Little Four has to go handle things now..." That said, he ran away with a whoosh.

# Chapter 230

## The Open Secret of the Military Academy!

"This Little Four is really becoming more and more daring!" Ling Lan once again confirmed that this intelligence entity of the learning space was definitely an oddball, acting in all ways exactly like a real child. He had displayed all kinds of emotions and behaviours, including playing mischievous tricks and shirking from his responsibilities.

Ling Lan piloted her mecha to the western gate of the town. The western gate had slightly less traffic than the other gates, because this was the beginning of the pathway to Suncreed City. It should be known that even if the path to Suncreed City was cleared by someone, it would only take one day for the savage beasts inhabiting it to respawn and repopulate it. Most notably, those savage beasts were truly too formidable — anyone below advanced mecha warrior status just had no hope of passing through, so this was considered the hardest road to take during the newbie period.

Ling Lan's rabbit mecha laid there nibbling on its carrot, twitching its head. Its adorable appearance drew significant attention again, though that attention very quickly subsided as well. After all, in the end, a mecha's worth still depended on its capabilities. Aside from a portion of women who would be sold by the sheer cuteness, men would just toss a curious glance or two at it and then cast it to the back of their minds <sup>1</sup>.

Very soon, Ling Lan saw a humanoid mecha appear at the western gate, looking around left and right. She thus knew that this person should be [No Mecha Unrepaired], and so operated her mecha to hop over to the other. This sudden movement seemed to startle the other, as the other reflexively went into a defensive stance. It was clear to see that this mecha operator's reaction time was not bad.

"[No Mecha Unrepaired]?" asked Ling Lan in the public comms channel.

"[Lingtian First-String]?" The other's tone of disbelief clearly showed how disappointed he was in the appearance of Ling Lan's mecha.

"Yes!" replied Ling Lan.

"Sorry, but I have to go now!" [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s voice was tinged with anger — he felt that he had been played. He immediately turned his mecha around to leave, but found a carrot-shaped sword held up before his mecha.

"We agreed that you would take a look at my combat ability. I do not wish for someone to violate the agreement." Ling Lan's voice was extremely cold. For some unknown reason, [No Mecha Unrepaired] actually felt a chill penetrate into his heart.

"Hn?" This questioning sound of Ling Lan's carried a hint of a threat, though she was internally sweatdropping. For the sake of points, she was actually in the process of threatening someone now... where had her morals gone?

"Fine!" Without thinking about it, [No Mecha Unrepaired] agreed. As a genius mecha modifier, he was very well-versed in mecha controls. He had turned around so swiftly, but in the same period of time, the other had been able to take two steps forwards and bring up a weapon to block him. Based on that operation alone, he could sense that the other's skills could not be weak. This was one of the reasons why he had capitulated so easily; of course, he would never admit that he had been scared into changing his mind.

"This road leading to Suncreed City has a lot of savage beasts along the way. Of course, the savage beasts closer to the western gate are not as fearsome as those deeper along the path. As we move ahead, we will see the first wave of savage beasts. If you can obtain my acknowledgement, I will give the mission to you," said [No Mecha Unrepaired], "Of course, if you can't satisfy me, I will not continue on with you."

"Okay!" Ling Lan agreed to [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s conditions. "But, you need to keep up with my speed, otherwise I won't bother with you." Ling Lan did not wish to have to divide her attention to protect him while she was fighting. Ling Lan's thoughts went like this — if the other could not even protect himself while she blocked off a majority of the savage beasts, she would rather give up the mission than help him. Ling Lan felt that if he was not skilled enough, he might as well continue training in Three-Seas Town, waiting to become strong enough before travelling out into the greater world outside.

"Alright!" [No Mecha Unrepaired] peered at this rabbit mecha before him and replied.

The two mecha flew rapidly towards Suncreed City. There were several mecha operators around who recognised [No Mecha Unrepaired]; some of them quickly



turned on their communicators and shared their latest discovery with their friends.

"Extra, extra <sup>2</sup>! I just saw [No Mecha Unrepaired] challenging the road to Suncreed with a rabbit trainee mecha."

"Tch, this fellow still hasn't given up? Didn't he die enough last time to scare him off?"

"He's really keeping worse and worse company now, actually trying it with a trainee mecha this time. I bet that he will die halfway through again." This was a voice filled with schadenfreude.

"Who asked him not to join the Thunder King Faction? Serves him right to be stuck hanging around Three-Seas Town! I heard that the Thunder King has already put out the word that no one is to help him. Weren't there three outsider punks who accepted his mission a few days back? It was lucky that their team was wiped out on the mission, otherwise those three punks would have been wiped out by the Thunder King's men anyway." This was a student from the First Men's Military Academy. Only someone from the First Men's Military Academy would understand the conflict between [No Mecha Unrepaired] and the Thunder King.

"Hey, where do you think that rabbit mecha is from? Actually courting death by accepting the mission?" asked another First Men's Military Academy student.

"He's most definitely not from our First Men's Military Academy, or else how would he dare to accept that mission? At the military academy, this is already an open secret. Even the new cadets of this year would have been warned by the older cadets," replied another First Men's Military Academy student, "Only those new cadets from the other military academies might not know about this and dare to take the mission. However, once they are taught a lesson a few times, these newcomers will probably not accept [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s mission anymore."

"Say, do you think the Thunder King will make a move this time?" Even more military academy cadets joined the conversation to ask curiously. It turned out that the channel they had been using to chat was the channel exclusive to the military academies.

"Do you think they can pass the Suncreed passage mission?" someone shot back, "If they can't pass, why would the Thunder King act? Still, it's possible he might punish them after the fact."

"That rabbit is really too unlucky. New to the mecha world, and already clashing with

the Thunder King." Someone began feeling sorry for that extremely adorable rabbit.

"This rabbit is still considered fortunate. At most being punished in the mecha world would not do him any real harm. If he were a First Men's Military Academy cadet, then that would truly be called terrible. The Thunder King will definitely not let anyone who disobeys him go free." In the First Men's Military Academy, the Thunder King was the undisputed one of a kind king. His strength was formidable and his faction was strong — even the leaders of the second and third factions did not dare to oppose him openly.

"Have you all heard? This year's new cadets are pretty wild, actually forming their own new cadet regiment, unwilling to join any other factions. Is the Thunder King and the others just gonna leave them be?" Someone suddenly brought up this question.

"These new cadets may be having the time of their lives now, but they'll have lots to cry about later. The Thunder King does not have time now to bother with these trivial things. He's in Closed Door Meditation right now. Once he is done, he will be the first 4th year of our military academy to ascend to ace operator! At that time, you think the Thunder King will let these new cadets do as they like, breaking the order of the academy?" This speaker was most likely from the Thunder King Faction; his news was extremely up-to-date.

"So that's how it is!" The comms channel was filled with sighs of admiration. Someone could be heard to mutter, "I wonder if the Thunder King Faction is still accepting people..."

The informant said haughtily, "To enter the Thunder King Faction, the minimum requirement is to be at intermediate mecha warrior level. Once you all achieve that, perhaps I can put in a word for you all."

"Alright! I'll add you as a friend. You must follow through and help me out in the future, okay?" The people in the channel all became excited, all speaking up to request a friend slot with the informant. If they could really join the Thunder King Faction, it would be pretty much guaranteed that they would be able to strut around on campus without worry for their remaining six years at the First Men's Military Academy.

"Hehe, no problem..." The informant did not expect that he would become so popular just by revealing a little bit of news about the Thunder King. In his mind, he once again praised himself for the amazingly accurate decision of joining the Thunder King

Faction back then.



Ling Lan and [No Mecha Unrepaired] had no idea that after their departure, those mecha operators who recognised [No Mecha Unrepaired] would spread the word of their meetup. They were currently fully focused on getting as fast as they could to the closest savage beast territory from the western gate.

Very quickly, they had arrived at the location. Observing the teeming horde of white-furred animals with crimson eyes before them, Ling Lan's brow twitched involuntarily, "Rabbits?" Godd\*mmmit, asking her rabbit to kill rabbits? Why did this seem so comedic no matter how you looked at it?

[No Mecha Unrepaired] did not seem to sense anything wrong with the scene, replying seriously, "Yes. Don't underestimate them. These mutated rabbits are very terrifying. Their teeth and claws are their killing tools, but what's even more frightening is their kicking power, fully capable of killing lower level mecha instantly..." That said, he cast a worried look at Ling Lan. The other was just a trainee mecha rabbit. If by any chance he was killed in the very first second of attacking, that would be too pitiful... [No Mecha Unrepaired] could not help but add on kindly, "If you think it's impossible, why don't we just go back?"

Ling Lan's rabbit mecha removed the carrot from its mouth with its front claws. She then said coldly, "Give me two minutes!"

Although it really would not take that long for her to kill off all these rabbits, Ling Lan did not want to reveal the full extent of her capabilities before someone unfamiliar. Thus, she had extended the time needed to 4 times what she actually needed.

Then, Ling Lan controlled the rabbit mecha to spring powerfully off its hind legs, and the entire rabbit mecha flew towards the horde of mutated rabbits...

"Ah, you can't do it that way...!" Seeing the rabbit mecha's actions, [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s expression paled dramatically as he gave a mournful cry. Once the ground began to shudder violently, the rabbits of the entire area would be drawn over — at that time, even an advanced mecha might lose his life easily if he weren't careful. This was yet another reason why the path to Suncreed was so hard to get through.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] quickly operated his mecha to flee the scene, running up to 100 metres away before turning back tremulously to peek back at Ling Lan. And then, he was flabbergasted by what he saw.

Ling Lan controlled her rabbit mecha to swing the carrot-shaped sword in its hand around in a deadly dance. Each and every rabbit that leapt at her was sent flying with one strike, where they then laid still, never getting up again.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] quickly halted his mecha and zoomed in on the image on his mecha's screen. The rabbits on the ground had all had their chests pierced clear through, dying instantly.

In his utter stupefaction, [No Mecha Unrepaired] shifted his screen back to focus on the battling Ling Lan. Only then did he see how casual and easy every move of Ling Lan's seemed; never once did that red carrot strike air. One time, he saw the other control the rabbit mecha to stomp heavily on the ground, sending the entire mecha up into the air. Then, with a whirlwind gyration of its body, all the mutated rabbits leaping at it had been swept away. That scene was just as if a peerless ultimate master rabbit had come to terrorize a bunch of harmless and puny rabbits who did not know how to fight...

# Chapter 231

## Sneak Attack!

[No Mecha Unrepaired] knew that those seemingly harmless rabbits were actually extremely horrifying for low-level mecha operators, being able to kill them easily in an instant. However, this scene before him — this mecha rabbit, obviously still a trainee, going on a rampage — gave him the false impression that even he would be able to go forward and kick those rabbits around and slaughter them as he liked.

Time passed by bit by bit; the number of rabbits still alive on the field grew fewer and fewer. By the time the blood of the final rabbit was splattered onto the grassy field, precisely 2 minutes had passed, not a millisecond more or less than what the rabbit mecha had claimed at the start.

What strength and confidence was this, for the other to be able to give such an accurate timeframe? [No Mecha Unrepaired] could not help but pinch his cheeks within his cockpit, only believing that this was real at the resulting sting of pain he felt.

Heavens, what level of mecha operator had he ended up hiring? Even an advanced mecha would not have been able to defeat such a large number of mutated rabbits so easily within two minutes, especially under conditions like this where it had been surrounded on all sides. [No Mecha Unrepaired] could not help but shudder at that moment... could the other be a special-class operator? Considering that possibility, he was beyond exhilarated. Perhaps this time he would really be able to successfully arrive at Suncreed City, no longer being stuck at Three-Seas Town, unable to improve his mecha repair skill level.

Ling Lan easily finished off the final rabbit — aside from a few drops of blood dripping from the red carrot weapon, there was not a single speck of blood on the white body of the rabbit mecha, which remained as pristine as before. This was the result of Ling Lan slowing down her speed and her skilful control.

With a stomp of its hind feet, the rabbit mecha sprang off the ground once more and engaged its thrusters, arriving in the blink of an eye to stand before [No Mecha Unrepaired]. This sudden movement once again gave [No Mecha Unrepaired] a fright. However, this time, he no longer reflexively shifted into a defensive stance — humans

were truly extremely adaptable creatures.

Ling Lan controlled the rabbit mecha to use its carrot to rap on the humanoid mecha, and asked calmly, "So?" The voice was as frigid as before, but the threat behind the tone was palpable, as if at the first hint that [No Mecha Unrepaired] would even dare to utter 'no', he would be immediately destroyed.

Right then, [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s heart was filled with joy, not one bit of unwillingness to be found. He hurriedly replied, "It's great! Sir [Lingtian First-String], this mission is in your hands now." Then, he quickly contracted Ling Lan for his mission — he did it very speedily, afraid that Ling Lan might reconsider and refuse.

Of course, once this contract was established, it would be maintained by the mecha world's mainframe, which would not allow either side to break the agreement without good reason.

Sir? Did her voice really sound so much like a man's now? Speechless, Ling Lan pressed the button to accept the mission. She did not know whether she should be proud of herself for impersonating a man so successfully...

Since the two of them had come to an agreement, they did not continue to linger here, immediately beginning their journey towards Suncreed City.

Along the way, Ling Lan not only encountered small packs of mutated wolves and many mutated wild bulls, but even a pack of five mutated black panthers in the end. The further along they went, the stronger the beasts became. When a pack of mutated cheetahs showed up, they wasted quite a bit of Ling Lan's time due to their extraordinary speed. After all, in comparison with the mutated cheetahs, the rabbit mecha's speed was nothing. Fortunately, her innate talent Profound Insight was very helpful — it discovered the cheetahs' weakness not soon after, allowing Ling Lan to kill them. Still, the struggle had lasted a full five minutes.

"Looks like, against the stronger mutated beasts, a trainee mecha is still rather weak overall." If Ling Lan had been given an advanced mecha, these cheetahs would have been killed with a swing of her arm. Even if she had not been given an advanced mecha, but a lower mecha instead, Ling Lan still would not have wasted five minutes. It was likely that she would have only needed one to two minutes to wrap things up. This was the mecha's limits — even for Ling Lan, who was already at ace operator level control, it was impossible to execute an instant kill against a beast that was stronger than the

mecha's abilities.

Even as Ling Lan was feeling rather sorry about the state of her mecha, [No Mecha Unrepaired] was filled with awe at how easily Ling Lan had dispatched these beasts. Mind you, back then, he and the three intermediate mecha warriors had been killed at this spot, instantly being sent straight back to revive by these cheetahs. Back then, they had not even seen much of the cheetahs before they had been killed and returned to the town.

But now, the five cheetahs had appeared at the same time, but had still been easily handled by the other within a short period of time. With this, [No Mecha Unrepaired] was even more confident in their chances of arriving at Suncreed City safely. Furthermore, he had also confirmed to himself that the one controlling this rabbit trainee mecha was most definitely a special-class mecha master. He felt extremely fortunate, actually being able to coincidentally meet such a strong person in the game world. Only a strong person such as this would be able to make his way freely around the low-level world using just a trainee mecha.

Ling Lan had just finished off the five cheetahs, not yet moving ahead, when she heard Little Four exclaim joyfully, "Boss, it's right here! The starlight conversion power core should be inside the ancient den of the monster of this mountain."

Ling Lan said calmly, "Done killing the viruses?" Ever since Little Four had been seen through by her, and had used the excuse of killing a virus to run away, he had not presented himself again. Ling Lan had thought that this brat would not dare to face her anymore — unexpectedly, he had suddenly emerged again now.

Little Four stiffened, and then forced a pandering smile on his face. "All done, all done. Oh Boss, you really do care about me! Little Four is so touched...!" That said, he did not forget to hug Ling Lan's thigh and act cute with all his might, desperately hoping for Boss to forget his previous disrespect.

Ling Lan lightly flicked Little Four on the head. "Don't try to act cute and brush it off. In a bit, you'll be helping me to redeem yourself!" Little Four hurriedly agreed. Boss was clearly prepared to let him off — of course he would not be so stupid as to let this chance go by.

And so, Ling Lan changed directions to follow an almost indiscernible mountain trail, heading into a dense forest.

Seeing this, [No Mecha Unrepaired] panicked, shouting hurriedly, "Sir [Lingtian First-String], where are you going?" Did the other not want to bring him to Suncreed City anymore?

Ling Lan replied, "I want to clean up the old den of the mutated beasts a little."

"Ah, those mutated beasts in the home den are all very formidable! We definitely can't go. It's too dangerous! Besides, to get to Suncreed City, we only need to keep following Suncreed Road. There is no need at all to take this risk."

Ling Lan abruptly turned her head to look at [No Mecha Unrepaired] and said flatly, "This is my mission. If you don't want to go, then just wait for me here."

Being pierced by the vacant gaze of the rabbit mecha, [No Mecha Unrepaired] did not dare to offer any more objection. Right then, he finally realised that he was really just a convenient tag-along for the other. Having figured that out, he came to find that Ling Lan was gradually pulling further and further away. He abruptly shouted, "[Lingtian First-String], wait for me! I'll go too." Leaving him here all alone... it was definitely much more dangerous to stay behind than to follow the other. He had no intention of losing his life here.

"What? You're not afraid of accompanying me to your death?" Ling Lan halted to mock icily.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] hurriedly said, "We've travelled all this way together. No matter what, there's some bond between us now. How can I watch a friend brave danger on his own and stay behind alone? No matter what, we should share our joys and pain, and go through thick and thin together..." As if knowing that these words of his were not at all convincing, [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s voice became softer and softer as he spoke, almost not daring to meet the spirited rabbit eyes of Ling Lan.

Ling Lan merely glanced at the other without puncturing his lies. Since [No Mecha Unrepaired] dared to brave danger with her, it meant that he trusted her abilities to a large degree. Ling Lan did not say anything further, tacitly agreeing to let [No Mecha Unrepaired] tag along.

The two of them entered the forest depths. They had not gone far when Ling Lan suddenly shoved [No Mecha Unrepaired]. This movement was too sudden — [No Mecha Unrepaired] was totally unprepared. He fell to the ground instantly, tumbling



two circles away...

"Boom!" Where [No Mecha Unrepaired] had been standing, some unknown item had crashed heavily into the ground, throwing up countless amounts of dirt and fallen leaves.

Right then, Ling Lan's rabbit mecha suddenly pushed its engines to send the entire mecha into the air, flipping into an upside down position with the carrot in its hands facing downwards. Then, like with a nail, it drove the carrot powerfully straight into the ground below.

"Boom!" This was the sound of the mecha hitting the earth. Immediately after, the rabbit mecha leapt up nimbly to dash 5 metres away and land securely on all four feet.

Following this series of actions, a string of violent snapping and twisting could be heard. In the end, everything fell silent again, and when all the flying dirt and leaves finally settled back onto the ground, the scene became clear to the eye.

Only then could [No Mecha Unrepaired] see that, where he had initially been standing was now a deep gouge of about half a metre wide and 30 centimetres deep. That gouge which looked like the result of a whip let [No Mecha Unrepaired] know that if he had been struck by it, even if his mecha had not been destroyed, the power behind the blow would have been enough to rattle him to death.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] could not help but glance gratefully at Ling Lan; the other had saved his life once again. If the other had not pushed him aside so decisively, he would have died and returned to Three-Seas Town. But before he could speak up to thank the other, he was shocked into silence by the scenario on Ling Lan's end.

Not five metres away from the rabbit mecha, a gruesome large mouth was opened ravenously. Four razor-sharp teeth shone with a chilling light as the jaw opened and closed while the creature continued to struggle, as if wanting to leap forwards to swallow the rabbit mecha not too far from it whole. However, no matter how much it struggled, it could not escape from its bindings to move even another step...

[No Mecha Unrepaired] very quickly realised that he was looking at the head of a snake. Moreover, at the critical juncture between the head and the rest of its body, a sword had penetrated to the hilt. The hilt of the sword was green in colour, and was shaped like leaves. [No Mecha Unrepaired] naturally knew that this was that carrot

blade of the rabbit mecha.

Meanwhile, the flesh beneath the pierced juncture, spreading as far as half a metre, had already become a mess of minced meat. The tail part of the snake, due to being disconnected from the head, had reflexively curled up on itself, unable to make any more attacks.

This horrifying beast before them was a gigantic mutated python, whose attack power must be unrivalled. If an intermediate mecha warrior had come here, he might very well have died from a sneak attack before even being able to actually meet it head on. No, perhaps even an advanced mecha warrior would have found it difficult to escape from this unorthodox attack. But now, this mutated python had had its vital point pierced by the rabbit mecha in the span of just one sneak attack, completely losing its ability to fight back.

"Can you still stand up?" Ling Lan looked towards [No Mecha Unrepaired], frowning. Had she used too much strength earlier, inadvertently injuring the other?

Only then did [No Mecha Unrepaired] stir from his stunned torpor. He quickly scrambled off the ground and said, "It's fine, I'm fine."

# Chapter 232

## The Python Family!

The gigantic python finally ceased its struggles. The giant snake head crashed abruptly to the ground, sending some dirt and leaves up into the air again. [No Mecha Unrepaired] said carefully, "It's dead..."

"Not yet!" responded Ling Lan coldly. How could this petty trick fool her? In the primordial forest, what savage beast had she not seen? Some were even slyer than this python here.

"Ah..." [No Mecha Unrepaired] stared gobsmacked at the python — in that state and it still wasn't dead?

Ling Lan drew a short sword each from behind the two hind legs of the rabbit. With a powerful swing of her left hand, one of the short swords flew, whistling through the air right at the head of the python.

Just as the blade was about to strike, the python suddenly raised its head to snap its jaws savagely over that flying short sword. With a loud crunch, that short sword made of high-durability steel broke into pieces. It was clear to see how great the bite force quotient <sup>1</sup> of the python was. If Ling Lan had walked forward personally, her vital points might have accidentally been caught in its sneak attack, destroying her mecha and losing her life.

However, this frightening strike was also the python's final attack. Heaven knows when, the second short sword in Ling Lan's hands had been sent flying out without a sound. Even as the python's jaw shattered the first short sword, the second short sword buried itself in the snake's eyes, piercing through the entire snake head.

In the throes of death, the python seemed to be in great pain. It split its mouth open wide in a howling cry to the heavens. After a long ear-splitting wail, the snake head finally fell heavily to the ground once more, sending yet another spray of dust and dirt into the air.

Seeing this, Ling Lan made the rabbit mecha jump forwards. [No Mecha Unrepaired]

was horrified by this, shouting loudly, "[Lingtian First-String], watch out in case it isn't dead!" If by any chance the other was playing dead again, wouldn't it be very dangerous for the rabbit mecha to just approach it like that?

"This time it's really dead," replied Ling Lan calmly as she walked up to the head. She pulled out the carrot sword pinning the snake by its vital point, placing it back securely into the rabbit's mouth. Next, she pulled out the short sword which had burrowed into the snake head, rubbing it against the ground a few times before putting it back behind her mecha's hind legs with some disgust. There was no helping it — the weapons on the trainee mecha were just too few; Ling Lan could not afford not to take it back.

As Ling Lan made preparations to leave, [No Mecha Unrepaired] spoke up once more, "Um, aren't you taking the spoils of victory?"

Previously, when the rabbit mecha had finished off those other mutated beasts, it had never once taken the spoils of victory off those mutated beasts' bodies. [No Mecha Unrepaired] felt his heart ache at the waste — mind you, those were all points! Although each spoil would only offer several decimal points worth of points, many a little makes a mickle <sup>2</sup>! With that many beasts, if they had collected all of the spoils, it would have amounted to over at least several tens of points.

Living in the mecha world, restrictions were everywhere if one did not have points. If he had countless points, then he would not have been stuck so pitifully at Three-Seas Town for so long. He could have just offered 10,000 points as a reward — then, even the Thunder King would not have been able to stop a strong mercenary from bringing him out of Three-Seas Town.

"Spoils of victory?" asked Ling Lan curiously. She truly had no idea about these sorts of things.

"Yes! The beasts have lots of good things on their bodies. As long as we collect them, we can take them to an exchange store to redeem points. For instance, the teeth of this python — each one could be worth 3 points, 4 of them giving a total of 12 points. Like the pelts of the rabbits you have been killing all this way — each would be worth 0.2 points, while the pelts of the wild wolves would give 0.3 points..." [No Mecha Unrepaired] really knew the value of the spoils of victory like the back of his hand. He detailed all the wastage Ling Lan had committed this entire journey.

After listening for half a day <sup>3</sup>, Ling Lan finally got the gist that there was still this

method of gathering points within the mecha world. However, she took a look at that snake's head... fine, she really had no interest in touching that ugly body again, so she said, "You collect it!"

[No Mecha Unrepaired] thought Ling Lan was letting him help her collect the spoils, and so happily made a sound of acknowledgement before moving forwards to collect those 4 sharp teeth from the snake's head. Ling Lan's terrifying combat power this entire way had let [No Mecha Unrepaired] understand that that bit of reward he was offering was totally insufficient to hire such a formidable mecha operator. He really wanted to use something else to supplement his payment — if he could help the other collect the spoils of victory and get a bit more points that way, he would feel less guilty.

As [No Mecha Unrepaired] harvested the teeth, he sighed, looking at that centre section of the python which had been smashed into mincemeat. This was the result of Ling Lan plunging down from a tall height, using gravity and the weight of her own mecha to crush the snake's body with one strike. This move was flawless both in terms of timing and accuracy, proving that Ling Lan's mecha control skills had already reached a point where her body and the mecha had become one. This was the mark of a special-class operator, which also proved that [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s deduction was correct. The operator of this rabbit mecha before him was most definitely a mysterious and powerful special-class operator.

Of course, [No Mecha Unrepaired] was not sighing over the other's strength. Instead, he was sighing over the fact that that section of snake skin had been ruined by Ling Lan's brute force. He silently thought to himself that, if they could have peeled it off in perfect condition, such a ginormous piece of snake skin would have been worth at least 30 points. This was already among the highest amount one could get from the redemption of victory spoils. Alright, in the process of accumulating points to hire a master, [No Mecha Unrepaired] had undoubtedly become somewhat of a point-freak.

[No Mecha Unrepaired]'s harvesting ability was rather strong — the four teeth took him less than two minutes. Still, even so, Ling Lan felt this was not worth it. Perhaps that was why Little Four had not suggested this method to her. Ling Lan only needed perhaps several seconds to kill a beast, but collecting the spoils would waste a lot of her time. This was definitely not something Ling Lan wanted.

Seeing [No Mecha Unrepaired] done with the harvesting, Ling Lan did not linger, continuing forwards. Although they remained vigilant for the rest of the way, they did not encounter any more savage beasts, nor did they meet any dangers. The

strangeness of the situation made [No Mecha Unrepaired] become restless and unsettled. However, for some unknown reason, seeing the rabbit mecha hopping unhurriedly before him — each hop eating up the same amount of distance, with the exact same arc and rhythm — this precise operation soothed his emotions, allowing him to regain his calm...

After travelling for about 5 minutes, Ling Lan suddenly stopped and said, "Careful."

Although [No Mecha Unrepaired] was not officially trying to become a mecha warrior, these couple of years of watching out for himself had given him extremely rich combat experience. Hearing Ling Lan's warning, he instantly assumed a defensive stance, multiple viewing angles popping up on his mecha's screen to cover his surroundings. However, aside from the silence, there was nothing else strange about the situation.

No, in fact there was still noise. It was the sound of tree leaves being rustled by the wind, but this was extremely normal... Sweat beaded on [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s forehead — the calmer and more normal things seemed, the more it meant danger was imminent.

At this moment, [No Mecha Unrepaired] still did not realise that he now trusted Ling Lan unconditionally. It was because of this that he took Ling Lan's simple warning so seriously, to the extent that he would believe a hazard was right before them.

"Jump!" shouted Ling Lan abruptly. Without even thinking, [No Mecha Unrepaired] operated his mecha to leap into the air. In his screen, he saw a flash of red light sweep beneath his mecha's feet.

"Swish!" It was the sound of something piercing through flesh and blood, or perhaps stabbing into earth. [No Mecha Unrepaired] had not yet figured out the sound when he heard a tremendous snapping sound coming from not too far behind him.

Before [No Mecha Unrepaired] could expand the scope of vision of his mecha to look, he felt his mecha being thrown into the air by a great force.

From his screen, [No Mecha Unrepaired] could clearly see that the one who had attacked him had been the rabbit mecha. The other had given him a solid kick with its hind legs. This kick was even more forceful than the force Ling Lan had used to shove him aside earlier, causing [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s mecha to fly up high, soaring over several large trees, before crashing heavily to the ground about 30 metres away.

If not for the fact that [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s physical constitution could still be considered excellent, just this series of collisions alone could have given him grave injuries. Despite not being injured, [No Mecha Unrepaired] still felt his Qi and blood roiling from the concussive force, and could not help but spurt out a mouthful of blood...

*"Could it be that [Lingtian First-String] is trying to kill me?"* This was [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s first thought. However, he quickly dispelled it, because he believed that with [Lingtian First-String]'s abilities, killing him would be as easy as a lift of a hand. He would not just be left with such minor injuries.

Meanwhile, on Ling Lan's end, she had borrowed the reaction force from kicking [No Mecha Unrepaired], assisted by the thrust of her engines, to rise up swiftly into the air. This allowed her to dodge the speedy attack of a silver beam of light, while also helping [No Mecha Unrepaired] to dodge this ruthless killing attack at the same time. Based on the trajectory of the silver light, the first one to be hit would have been [No Mecha Unrepaired].

Ling Lan controlled her mecha to land securely on the ground. She carefully observed a gigantic silver python coiled up approximately 10 metres away, which was already preparing to launch its next attack. This python was even more colossal than the python Ling Lan had killed earlier. Two snake eyes as large as lanterns were beaming with coldly sinister light, not at all trying to hide the killing intent within them.

"Who'd have thought that the savage beast occupying this area would be from the python family." Ling Lan's brow furrowed. Even though Ling Lan had been schooled by the learning space in such a way that she was already no longer like a girl, not at all afraid of any fierce beasts or savage creatures, this did not eradicate her inherent nature of loathing these types of slithery cold-blooded animals. Therefore, when she discovered that the opponent was these pythons, some dislike still reared within her heart.

Ling Lan cast a glance at a distance not too far off, where her carrot-sword had already pinned a slightly smaller python. That python was struggling desperately, trying to wrest free of the carrot-sword's blade.

She could not help but 'tsk' in annoyance; Ling Lan knew that she would definitely not be able to retrieve the carrot-sword right now to attack. Furthermore, as the rabbit mecha was a trainee mecha, other than the carrot-sword, it only had two high-

performance steel short swords as its cold weapons. One of the swords had already been 'nobly sacrificed' in the previous fight, so the only cold weapon Ling Lan could use now was that one remaining short sword.

Although there was still a beam handgun on the back of the mecha, Ling Lan knew very well that it would be impossible to overcome the defensive power of this humongous python's skin relying on that handgun alone. Of course, it could not be said that it would be useless — if one managed to shoot a vital point, it would still be effective. For example, the eyes of the python, or perhaps the vulnerable mouth cavity unprotected by the skin... however, in a moving fight, it would be extremely difficult to hit these points accurately. Unless it was absolutely unavoidable, Ling Lan did not plan to use that unreliable beam handgun.

Ling Lan lifted up the only remaining short sword she had with her left hand. Right now, she was a little regretful at her own overconfidence. She should have prepared a sharp long sword beforehand, or perhaps a lightsaber — that way, killing these pythons would be much easier.



# Chapter 233

## The Weapon 'Regretless'! !

Another resounding "Bam!"

The giant python was pouncing forward again. Ling Lan controlled her mecha to leap up into the air, kicking forwards forcefully with its hind legs. The python was sent flying back by the powerful kick — the python and the mecha were only in contact for a brief moment before they were moving off in different directions again to land in two separate locations, once more facing each other in a standoff.

"Warning! Over-capacity usage of mecha's hind legs. Damage at 7%. Please use with caution; cherish your mecha!" Within the cockpit, the mecha's mainframe immediately issued a warning, protesting the brute actions of its operator.

That last kick may have pushed the python back, but because the giant python was really just too big and too heavy, the mecha had had to bear a force which exceeded its anti-shock capacity, causing the mecha to incur a certain degree of damage.

"Tch, even this is no good?" Ling Lan had thought to use the mecha's own body to attack to compensate for the lack of weapons, but now it looked like things would not be so simple. She smacked the control stick moodily and said, "This trainee mecha is just too godd\*mn fragile."

Little Four could not help but dab at his sweat inside the mindscape. Since the start of her studies, Ling Lan's mecha combat style was already showing signs of being of the wild and barbaric type. He still remembered how she had caused her mecha to be all scratched up, bearing wounds from being pushed beyond its limits. In the end, they had had no choice but to spend so much credits to repair the mecha, only thus preventing the mecha from completely breaking down. Therefore, regardless of how strong or solid the mecha was, it would not fare much better than this rabbit mecha in Ling Lan's hands. This was because Ling Lan would forever bring out the greatest combat power a mecha was capable of, even pushing for more — it would be stranger if the mecha did not break down!

[No Mecha Unrepaired] rubbed away the trickle of blood at the corner of his lips, forcefully suppressing the nausea he still felt from the bloody stench as he operated his mecha to get up from the ground. Meanwhile, the inside of his cockpit had long become flooded with alerts from the mainframe, which was warning non-stop that the mecha had been attacked, and displaying the resulting damage levels. He unstintingly used a low-level repair kit, letting the mecha be completely repaired in a very short period of time.

Of course, while he did all this, his gaze had not once left the battle scene 30 metres away. When he saw that the rabbit mecha was left with only one short sword weapon, he could not help but become anxious; he understood that if the rabbit mecha could not finish off this frighteningly ginormous python, the both of them would definitely lose their lives here.

"No, it was so difficult to find such a strong mecha operator to bring me to Suncreed City, I definitely cannot die here, wasting all that effort!" [No Mecha Unrepaired] was naturally unwilling to just admit defeat. He opened up his bag, desperately searching through it to see if there were any cold weapons the rabbit mecha could use within it. Right then, he was somewhat thankful that he was in the wilds, and not in a combat arena. In a combat arena, it was not permitted to change one's equipped weapons halfway.

When he came to a pitch-black weapon, he could not help but stare at it blankly. "Should we use this one?"

[No Mecha Unrepaired] looked at this cold weapon he had developed in Three-Seas Town. It was shaped like a tangdao <sup>1</sup> of olden times, but its blade was not like the clean diagonal-cut edge of a traditional tangdao, instead sporting an extremely conspicuous concavity. This concavity was deep near the edge, becoming gradually shallower as it travelled along the body of the blade to spread along its entire surface.

The entire sword was a sheet of black, not as eye-catching as other brighter and flashier weapons. However, it silently emitted a type of killing intent, letting people know that this was no ordinary sword. Of course, that was all they would know — only its creator and the one who used it would be able to truly comprehend the fearsome nature of this sword.

This was a lethal weapon [No Mecha Unrepaired] had forged using the best materials he could gather in Three-Seas Town. Back when he had succeeded, it had let him advance two stages, from trainee mecha mechanic to advanced mecha mechanic, in an instant. Back then, he had been young and cocky — in his pride and joy, he had forgotten that he should hide his light under a bushel <sup>2</sup> until he was sufficiently strong enough to protect himself. He had proclaimed his name in a high-handed fashion, allowing the Thunder King to figure out his identity. In the end, whether it was here in the mecha world, or in reality, the Thunder King had been pressuring him with the power of his faction to join his organisation.

As a result of his unwillingness to submit, he had been restricted by the other to Three-Seas Town, unable to move. If he was not able to pass the assessment this year because of this, then he would be mercilessly cast out from the First Men's Military Academy. The Thunder King was precisely such a ruthless character. Anyone who did not submit to him would definitely have their future crushed by him.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] had never ever considered selling off this cold weapon. Even though a few strong fighters had tried offering extremely high prices before out of curiosity at this weapon's stats, and he too had known that he might be able to leave Three-Seas Town if he just sold this sword... he had still decided to keep this weapon with him until he was pushed to the absolute brink. Not just because this was his pride and honour, but also as a reminder to himself of his ignorance, his hubris, his weakness, his shame, as well as his reason for resisting.

"I named it ' Regretless <sup>3</sup> ', to remind myself that I have chosen not to regret. At the same time, I also hope that this weapon will be able to display its glory in the hands of a mecha operator who would allow it to attack with no regrets... perhaps, its master has appeared!" [No Mecha Unrepaired] looked at the nimble figure of the rabbit before his eyes, and with a grit of his teeth, he resolutely pulled out the sword Regretless which meant so much to him.

As Regretless fully appeared in the dense forest, the temperature of the initially already extremely cold and sinister forest suddenly dipped further, causing [No Mecha Unrepaired] to tremble involuntarily.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] stroked the blade of Regretless affectionately. When he lifted his head once more, his gaze was filled with conviction. He knew very well that if [Lingtian First-String] truly kept his promise and brought him to Suncreed City, he would definitely offend the Thunder King. Even though [Lingtian First-String] had yet

to complete the mission, [No Mecha Unrepaired] found himself somehow trusting the other without reason. They had only spent a short while together, but he had come to learn that though the other was cold and domineering, he was definitely a responsible man.

Thus, he believed that Regretless would not fade into obscurity if he gave it to him. Under [Lingtian First-String]'s skilful control, Regretless would definitely shine its brightest. He hoped that one day, if [Lingtian First-String] really ended up clashing head-on with the Thunder King, the weapon he used in that encounter would be Regretless...

Intense light flashed through [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s eyes. He shouted abruptly, "[Lingtian First-String], catch!"

[No Mecha Unrepaired] controlled his mecha to throw Regretless; Ling Lan could only see a blur of dark light flying towards her. She calmly operated her rabbit mecha's right hand to reach out in a grab, and abruptly felt a heavy weight in her hands. Unprepared, she almost lost her footing. However, Ling Lan's adaptive ability was extremely powerful. She instantly activated the engine on her right side, using the great thrust generated by it to stabilise the mecha's slightly tilting body.

"What weapon is this, actually so heavy?" Ling Lan peered curiously at the weapon in the rabbit's hands. It was a cold weapon like a dao <sup>4</sup> but not a dao, like a sword but not a sword. Still, based on its weight that almost unbalanced her mecha alone, she could tell that this weapon was definitely special.

However, reality did not allow Ling Lan to think too much about it; the giant python was attacking again. The rabbit mecha's forelegs were not very strong — Ling Lan was afraid that she would not be able to wield this clearly very heavy weapon single-handedly. So, she decisively gripped the sword with both hands and swung it out fiercely towards the python's attack trajectory.

A loud "boom" rang out! The body of the sword and the snapping sharp fangs of the giant python collided violently!

Screech ~! The sturdy fang and the sword scraped against each other forcefully, emitting an ear-splitting high-pitched noise!

Crack! A crisp sound, and a fang suddenly popped out, whizzing away to bury itself in

a large tree not too far away from the fight.

This sword may seem extremely thin, but its hardness had exceeded that of the mutated python's fang. At the same time, this result also proved that the sharpness of the sword was at a fearsome level.

"Scram!" Ling Lan barked, revving her mecha's engines and its supplementary thrusters to the max. With a powerful spring of her strong hind legs, the force was transmitted to the sword in her hands, actually sending the entire giant python flying back.

A loud thump! The python once again crashed into the ground. But this time, things were different. It was actually writhing in agony, bellowing loudly to the skies.

It turned out that that previous strike had not only broken off one of the python's fangs, it had also left a wound on the python's face, which was currently bleeding profusely.

*"Oh my god, this sword is so sharp!"* Little Four was exclaiming in Ling Lan's mindscape. Mecha cold weapons in general sacrificed sharpness to maintain its sturdiness and strength. Many cold weapons were all made in the form of spiked club-like weapons, or perhaps extremely thick swords. Their characteristics were all focused on solidness and heft rather than sharpness.

*"It's not just sharp... its tensile strength is also amazingly good. Such a narrow blade actually having the same tensile strength as broader and thicker swords — no, perhaps even better by a bit."* Compared to sharpness, Ling Lan was more concerned about its tensile strength, for this would decide the lifespan of a weapon. No matter how sharp a sword was, if it did not have enough tensile strength, breaking apart after just a few uses, then it would still be utterly useless.

*"This mecha world is pretty interesting, actually having this sort of weapon..."* Little Four sensed that this mecha world was not completely the same as the real world. This piqued his interest to find out all the secrets of this mecha world.

*"Having this complementary weapon in hand, I don't need to waste any more time."* Ling Lan felt that she could finally let loose and attack now. She twirled her new sword once, then leapt unhesitatingly towards the giant python.

"F\*ck! Why didn't he first take some time to get used to the weapon? Attacking

directly? Does he not want to live?" [No Mecha Unrepaired] was beyond anxious — mecha operators needed to familiarise themselves with their mecha's weapons before they would be able to generate the greatest combat power with them. Using an unfamiliar weapon may backfire due to the resultant control errors, causing a person's combat power to decrease instead. This was also why [No Mecha Unrepaired] was worried for Ling Lan.

The giant python saw its initially defensive opponent suddenly initiating an attack. Feeling as if it had been impugned, it was instantly in a towering rage. It ignored the pain of the wound on its face to leap forwards once more, ready to teach this detestable fellow before it a profound lesson. It would let him know that a king's dignity would not be trod upon.

Both sides clashed once more, and this time, Ling Lan no longer had any reservations. She used the rabbit mecha's full power from the start, causing Little Four's heart to ache, as well as causing the cockpit to be filled with the ringing warnings of the mecha's mainframe, "Warning! Engine power exceeded 120%. Mecha operating over-capacity. Mecha is sustaining damage, 5%, 7%, 10%..."

# Chapter 234

## Starlight Conversion Power Core!

"What a nag!" Ling Lan turned off the mainframe's voice systems, putting all her attention into piloting her mecha. On the mecha's control panel, Ling Lan's fingers once more could be seen producing layered afterimages born of rapid speed. Stacked together, those layers of afterimages looked like a slowly blossoming lotus flower, insubstantial but unbelievably beautiful.

The rabbit mecha crouched abruptly, its forelegs holding the sword dipping slightly. This minor shift let Regretless swiftly evade the giant python's attacking fangs, sweeping below the python's jaw to get to its vital point, where the sword was suddenly twisted upwards. At the same time, the still crouching rabbit mecha had long made preparations to leap.

And so, a white rabbit could be seen to spring up from the ground into the air. The sunlight streaming in from between the tree leaves reflected off the mecha's body, causing the entire mecha to gleam brightly, dazzling the eyes. This flash of reflected light also caused the screen of [No Mecha Unrepaired], who had been closely watching the rabbit mecha, to suddenly white-out, going into a blinded state for a brief moment.

"HISSSS!" The giant python made a terrible cry. Regaining his vision, [No Mecha Unrepaired] saw the hissing head suddenly drop off the snake's body to fall to the ground. A fountain of blood gushed out from where it had been chopped off, spraying the ground about 10 metres around it crimson. And then, the humongous snake's body finally toppled down as well...

Ling Lan had already piloted the rabbit mecha to land about 10 over metres away from the snake's body, and so had not been hit with any of the blood spray. Her mecha suddenly swept a cool gaze in a particular direction, honing in on a patch of grass. This abrupt movement caused the grass there to shift slightly and then grow still, not to move again.

Ling Lan turned her gaze away in satisfaction. As long as they did not obstruct her from completing her mission, she too did not want to kill all of these savage beasts. After all, she had never wanted to accumulate points by collecting savage beast

materials anyway. With a bound, the rabbit mecha appeared before [No Mecha Unrepaired], reaching out a hand to return the weapon to the other. "Thank you. This weapon is very impressive. Now, I return it!"

Though the weapon was great, Ling Lan did not have any intention of claiming it for her own. As long as she upgraded to a better mecha and had it outfitted with the standard weapons, it would already be sufficient for Ling Lan's use.

Hearing this, [No Mecha Unrepaired] was taken aback. He had not expected [Lingtian First-String] to be unmoved by Regretless after experiencing its power first hand, that the other would still choose to return the weapon to him. From the other's tone of voice, [No Mecha Unrepaired] could tell for sure that this was not an act — the other really had no intention of taking the sword. This caused [No Mecha Unrepaired] to be deeply moved. Mind you, in the mecha world, in order to make their mecha stronger, some supreme weapons would often be fought over by the various strong fighters. Some would even resort to forceful and overbearing means to snatch these weapons from the hands of the weak.

This only further cemented [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s determination to gift the sword to [Lingtian First-String]. He said, "No need to return it to me. I'm giving you this weapon."

"For me? I don't think the mission reward included this." Although this weapon was great, Ling Lan did not want to owe [No Mecha Unrepaired] for no good reason.

"This is an extra. Consider it a token of my goodwill," said [No Mecha Unrepaired] with a smile. Just those rewards by themselves were not at all sufficient for him to hire a special-class operator.

"Since the mission reward had already been agreed on, you don't have to take out anything further to supplement it." Ling Lan quirked a brow, as if understanding [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s worries, and continued to say, "Don't worry, I will safely bring you to Suncreed City. I won't go against our agreement, and I won't ask for anything extra."

Ling Lan's words caused [No Mecha Unrepaired] to flush. He waved his hands frantically and said, "It's not like that. I have never doubted that you will honour our agreement. This weapon... for me, is special, because it was created by me." [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s voice became very soft, "Although many people had wanted to buy it, I



have never been able to sell it, always hoping that one day, someone who understands it will be able to take it together into battle, fulfilling the dreams I entrusted to it."

[No Mecha Unrepaired] lifted his head and said firmly, "It's called Regretless. I hope that someone strong can let it have no regrets in battle. After this period of time, I feel that you can fulfil my dream, and so, I want to give this weapon to you."

[No Mecha Unrepaired]'s words made Ling Lan take a close look at the stats of the weapon in her hands. Sure enough, its details stated —— Weapon's Name: Regretless (equippable back weapon for mecha); Characteristics: Sturdy, sharp; Weight: 206 kg. Creator: [No Mecha Unrepaired]. Quality: Superior.

Little Four was supplementing the information with explanations inside the mindscape for Ling Lan. Cold weapons like these of superior quality, with both high tensile strength and sharpness, were extremely rare. On top of that, its weight was enough for it to be used as a heavy weapon at critical moments as well. Regretless, which had no obvious weaknesses, could be used long-term, as long as it was not damaged, even up till she became an ace operator <sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile, in the mecha world, the level of familiarity one had with one's weapon would be completely reflected in the mecha's combat power. Thus, this sort of long-term weapon was what all mecha operators loved and appreciated. It could be said that if this weapon were to be auctioned, it would attract the attention of all mecha operators below the level of ace operator.

Ling Lan agreed with what Little Four was saying — when she had first begun practising with that carrot-weapon, she had also had to take a long time to get accustomed to it. Later, when she had switched to other mecha, in contrast to the relative simplicity of firearms, she had had to spend the most time on cold weapons. This was because battles involving cold weapons were extremely dangerous — any bit of carelessness could bring great calamity on oneself.

Ling Lan, who had not been moved by Regretless earlier, was really somewhat interested now. For a mecha operator, finding a suitable primary cold weapon they liked was an extremely key thing. Initially, Ling Lan had planned to change her mecha before considering this matter, but now, such an exceptional cold weapon had appeared, so Ling Lan had no choice but to begin thinking about it now.

Ling Lan did not struggle over the issue for long. She took Regretless back, slinging it into place at the only weapon's bezel at her mecha's back, and said, "Thank you. This

weapon is indeed very exceptional. It is precisely what I need, so I will gladly accept it. However, the rewards we had previously agreed on, you don't have to give those to me anymore." At this point, Ling Lan suddenly remembered that without those 200 points, she would not be able to get the full 1010 she needed. So, she added somewhat sheepishly, "Uh, the points are still needed. To compensate you for your loss, in future I can accept one more task from you. Of course, that task must be something I can do."

Ling Lan decided to fully end this entanglement here. She did not like to drag things out, and so stated things plainly right now. This was to prevent problems in future if they could not agree, wasting the ties of friendship formed here with the gift of this sword.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] had never intended Ling Lan to pay any price from the start, very sincerely wanting to entrust the best weapon he had created to the other. Therefore, hearing Ling Lan's words, he did not take Ling Lan's promise to heart, merely nodding happily in response. Right then, he did not know that this promise of Ling Lan's would cause his future to become extraordinary...

Ling Lan very quickly came to the place that Little Four had indicated, picking up an extremely common-looking rock. Seeing this, [No Mecha Unrepaired] said with some confused annoyance, "What's this? Is that your mission?" This dusty, grey, and unassuming rock could be found anywhere, but Ling Lan had selected it out very carefully from a pile of rocks.

"Yes, this is a starlight conversion power core," replied Ling Lan.

"What? This is that rumoured starlight conversion power core?!" [No Mecha Unrepaired] instantly exclaimed in shock.

"Rumoured?" Ling Lan blinked blankly at [No Mecha Unrepaired], unsure why the other would be so shocked.

"Oh [Lingtian First-String]... this is the only main storyline mission of Three-Seas Town. Although many people have accepted it before, no one has ever been able to find the core. Many people think that it's because the starlight conversion power core hasn't appeared yet, considering the mission an impossible mission to complete at the moment," explained [No Mecha Unrepaired].

"Is that so? I just saw that the points it offered was pretty good, so I accepted it," said

Ling Lan nonchalantly.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] almost wept — was this the difference between the strong and the average person? Missions that they did not even dare to think about, and the other had only casually accepted it because it offered more points... A thought suddenly occurred to [No Mecha Unrepaired]. "How did you know there would be a starlight conversion power core here? That this mission could be completed?"

Ling Lan replied calmly, "I've come here before and seen this. But I didn't know what it was for back then, so I didn't take it and just left it here..."

Didn't take it? [No Mecha Unrepaired] almost spewed blood. Alright, so the other had long been to this savage place before. Recalling how the other had seemed extremely familiar with the surroundings here, as if strolling through his own backyard, [No Mecha Unrepaired] understood and decided to let it go.

Ling Lan put the starlight conversion power core into her mecha's equipment storage and said, "Alright, let's go."

Having been stunned multiple times by Ling Lan, [No Mecha Unrepaired] naturally had no objections, quietly following Ling Lan away from the area.

The two of them had retraced their steps for about 10 minutes when Ling Lan suddenly glanced at [No Mecha Unrepaired] and asked, "Have you offended someone?"

While they had been at the town's western gate, the intermittent stares [No Mecha Unrepaired] had attracted from some people had let Ling Lan sense that her employer may very likely have offended someone. However, Ling Lan was not concerned by this — as long as she could obtain points, she would still accept the mission to escort the other.

[No Mecha Unrepaired]'s heart jolted and he croaked, "Why do you ask?"

"These mecha probably followed you here. However, they don't seem to be strong enough and were killed by the savage beasts." Ling Lan pointed at the forest ahead, signalling [No Mecha Unrepaired] that he could go take a look.

[No Mecha Unrepaired]'s expression paled and he hurriedly piloted his mecha over. Several quick bounds later and he could see several greyed out mecha laying flat on

the ground. This meant that these mecha were already in the state of death. Even if they decided to revive, the mecha would only disappear from this location 20 minutes later. During this period of time, anyone could come and take the equipment and weapons the other had dropped, or perhaps any other tools.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] saw that familiar lightning bolt <sup>2</sup> symbol on the mecha's chests and instantly said through clenched teeth, "It's them again, the Thunder King's faction."

"Thunder King?" Following behind [No Mecha Unrepaired], Ling Lan could not help but think that this name sounded really familiar...

# Chapter 235

## It's Time to Change!

At Ling Lan's question, [No Mecha Unrepaired] turned his head to smile wryly and said, "The Thunder King is the leader of the most powerful faction in our school. His faction is also good enough to rank within the mecha world..."

[No Mecha Unrepaired]'s words caused a thought to tumble through Ling Lan's mind. Suddenly, she recalled — wasn't there someone with the nickname of 'Thunder King' at the First Men's Military Academy? Could it be him? Ling Lan could not help but narrow her eyes. She asked slowly, "From... the First Men's Military Academy?"

"Ah? So you know of him too? Indeed, we are from the First Men's Military Academy," said [No Mecha Unrepaired] dejectedly, after his initial surprise.

"Aren't you all schoolmates? How did your relationship become so terrible, that he would even send people to come after you?" Ling Lan was now rather curious about how [No Mecha Unrepaired] had offended this Thunder King, causing the other to expend so much effort in monitoring him, yet not finishing him off completely.

"Actually, I don't have any real grudge with the Thunder King. I just refused to join his faction. I had thought that even if the other was unhappy about it, he wouldn't go too far. Unexpectedly, they actually began to restrict me on all fronts in the mecha world, not allowing me to get out of Three-Seas Town," explained [No Mecha Unrepaired], "I'm not a combat mecha operator, so I don't really go out much. Plus, as long as I don't join the arena fights in the town, they can't attack me there. They have no other choice than to restrict me from going to other towns to harass me."

At this point of his narration, [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s tone turned slightly bitter, "You don't know, but a portion of our results at the military academy comes from the mecha world. The deadline to produce results is three years. If we don't achieve the lowest requirements of the military academy in three years' time, we will be expelled. And this year, is my third year..." [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s gaze was currently extremely complicated, there was stubbornness, but also a trace of self-doubt. He gritted his teeth and said, "I need to leave Three-Seas Town this year and go to Suncreed City. This is my final chance. I cannot just admit defeat like this."

[No Mecha Unrepaired]'s dignified tenacity moved Ling Lan, and her impression of the Thunder King changed from indifference to a slight dislike. She scrunched her brow and asked, "The Thunder King is that overbearing?"

If the other's style was really like that, Ling Lan could almost guarantee that their new cadet regiment would definitely be targeted mercilessly by the other. An overbearing person like that would definitely not allow a new cadet faction he could not control to emerge. It looked like she would have to consider things properly now.

"Overbearing?" [No Mecha Unrepaired] shook his head. "He doesn't have much interest for normal students, never bothering them. However, he highly values some talented students, and will even use manipulations to force the other to join him. That said, I've heard that towards those people who join his faction, he takes care of them well in terms of both resources and physical support. Some students who were forced to join around the same time I was pressured to now don't seem to have much complaints, instead advising me to not miss the chance..." said [No Mecha Unrepaired] with a bitter smile. This was also why he had begun to waver.

"Of course, if those talented people are already being protected by some other faction, he will not intervene," added [No Mecha Unrepaired].

As Ling Lan listened, her sharp eyebrows <sup>1</sup> drew close together — from [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s words, Ling Lan could tell that this Thunder King was definitely an intelligent person. He knew how to ensure his own power base, while not allowing other factions to band together against him... if they had to face such an opponent, it would indeed be pretty troublesome.

At this moment, Ling Lan somewhat regretted accepting this mission. With the Thunder King's abilities, it was likely that even if [No Mecha Unrepaired] did not reveal her name, he would be able to find some clue to seek her out. This was not to say that Ling Lan feared the Thunder King; Ling Lan just did not want to offend the military academy's most powerful faction before she had figured out the full situation in the school. For Ling Lan, the later she became exposed, the safer it was for her. After all, the secret of her body made it inappropriate for her to stand in the limelight...

*"Ling Lan, gold will always shine. This is not something you can hide just because you want to hide it. Even though your gender needs to remain hidden, so you will indeed have some reservations at the military academy, this doesn't mean that you need to hold back or tolerate disrespect and humiliation. You must understand. A child of mine, Ling Xiao,*

*has no need to fear anything. When there is something you want to do, just charge forwards bravely and do it! Your father, Ling Xiao — me, is more than capable of bearing any consequences."* At this moment, the words that Ling Xiao had said to her when she had left home once more flashed within her mind, causing Ling Lan's heart to throb.

Ling Lan could not help but cover her face as her lips quirked up. Indeed, things were different for her now. She was not alone in protecting Lan Luofeng and the whole Ling family. Now, there was a large mountain standing behind her, the Federation's great general Ling Xiao, her most awesome dad of this life.

Ling Lan could not help but mock herself internally: *Ling Lan, you need to get used to this identity of yours now. You are no longer that background character lying on your sickbed waiting for death in your past life. You are now the 'son' of the Federation's great general Ling Xiao, the Federation's strongest god-class operator. You have enough clout to stand up to anyone's provocation. Even if the Thunder King is fiercer or stronger, so what? As a second-generation ancestor, do you really need to fear him?*

*Back then, didn't you tell Qi Long, Wu Jiong, and the others that, to live freely in the military academy, besides some things that have to be kept under wraps, they also cannot lack the necessary cockiness and aggression? As the person who said those things, how can you shrink back just because of the Thunder King's overbearing manner? You need to discard the you from your previous life, and truly become this world's Ling Lan...*

Right then, Ling Lan finally understood — ever since Ling Xiao had returned from the dead, her original goal of living a stable and peaceful life had ended. As the child of one of the Federation's generals who was also a god-class operator, she was destined not to have an ordinary life. Even if she regained her gender, she still would not be able to return to her initial tranquil life <sup>2</sup>. Her future was destined to be thrilling and dramatic...

It was time to change! A cold light flashed through Ling Lan's eyes, which held a conviction like never before!

[No Mecha Unrepaired] did not know that Ling Lan had already thought through certain matters, thus heralding a change in her personal style, making her even more proactive and forceful. Beaten down by the guilt in his heart, he began apologising, "I'm really sorry. This time, you sending me to Suncreed City will definitely offend the Thunder King."

"That's alright!" Having cast away her doubts, Ling Lan was calm as she said, "Thunder King? Perhaps other people might fear him... me, I'm not afraid."

That said, Ling Lan looked at [No Mecha Unrepaired] and said, "If by any chance you have any trouble, you can come look for me. You still have one chance to hire me. Don't waste it." Ling Lan's meaning was very clear. If the Thunder King came to pressure him again, [No Mecha Unrepaired] could seek her help.

Ling Lan's words caused [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s eyes to light up, but they very quickly dimmed again. He knew very well just how massive the Thunder King's faction was; although [Lingtian First-String]'s mecha combat skills were very strong, no matter how strong, it still could not stand up to the power of the Thunder King's faction! He could not be so selfish and let a friend be dragged into danger.

Seeing [No Mecha Unrepaired] fall silent, Ling Lan naturally knew what [No Mecha Unrepaired] was worrying about. This further improved her impression of [No Mecha Unrepaired], and she could not help but say, "For numbers, we have people too."

If she told Qi Long and the others that they may be going to war against the school's strongest faction soon, that bunch of brats would definitely be thrilled out of their minds... Ling Lan could almost see the eager appearances of Qi Long and the others grinding their fists and rubbing their palms gearing up for a fight, and her heart actually begun to heat up as well.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] was sceptical of Ling Lan's words, but he had still sensed the depth of Ling Lan's good intentions, and his heart could not help but feel thankful towards this mecha master he had met serendipitously. Even though he did not believe that [Lingtian First-String] would really be able to resolve his dilemma, he was still extremely grateful.

[No Mecha Unrepaired] made a low, solemn sound of agreement, his initially somewhat fluttering heart calming down instantly. Even though he knew the path before him was cloaked in uncertainty, right now he had rekindled his confidence, restored his fighting spirit, and was ready to continue walking courageously. Thank the heavens that he had not been abandoned by this world — there was still someone willing to give him a hand!

The two of them ended their conversation and continued their journey. As they left, [No Mecha Unrepaired] did not forget to pick up the equipment dropped by the 'dead'



mecha operators. Since he was already at odds with the Thunder King, he was not worried about adding on to his grudge.

Perhaps those on his trail had all died on the road, for Ling Lan and [No Mecha Unrepaired] did not see any sign of being followed as they journeyed, safely and peacefully arriving at Suncreed City.

Amidst [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s grateful thanks, Ling Lan received the 200 points she was owed and then bid farewell to him.

Seeing her original total of 0 points instantly jump to 200 points, Ling Lan's mood became exceptionally good. Subsequently, she took a trip to the city council to complete the letter delivery mission, before running non-stop to return to Three-Seas Town.

The moment she arrived at Three-Seas Town, Ling Lan discovered that quite a significant number of people were watching her. Ling Lan did not have to guess to know that these people must be the Thunder King's men. She had only entered the mecha world for a couple of hours — she had done nothing other than helping [No Mecha Unrepaired] complete his mission to get to Suncreed City and offending the Thunder King, so other people would really have no reason to notice her.

Ling Lan was not afraid. If the Thunder King's men did not come to mess with her, she would not actively go and provoke them either. After all, the Thunder King helmed the military academy's number one faction. At the heart of it, Ling Lan did not want to engage the Thunder King while her side was still disadvantaged on all fronts. Ling Lan was used to having the initiative, so she hoped to gather more first-hand information on the other first before making a decision. Moreover, the other factions were still observing coldly from the side-lines. Ling Lan did not want to weaken themselves unnecessarily for some other faction to swoop in and profit.

Ling Lan pretended not to know anything, going off to see the mayor to submit her mission. Besides gaining some equipment, she also received another 900 points, finally obtaining the minimum point requirement for her to challenge the arena fights. As soon as she was able, Ling Lan chose to enter the arena to take part in the arena challenge, hoping to speed up her point gathering process. She needed to level up as fast as possible so she could redeem the mecha with the lowest point requirement and then leave this place to meet up with Qi Long and the others. This was the task that Ling Lan had to complete first.

The moment Ling Lan entered the arena fights, several people behind her opened their communicators to contact some other people.

"Head, the other has entered the arena challenge fights. Now what?"

"Hmph, daring to oppose Leiting, this person is really seeking death. Spread the word — all the new trainee mecha operators who just joined the organisation in this district are to stop their activities and collectively take part in the challenge fights. If they meet the rabbit mecha, they should thrash him. I want him to have no chance of levelling up, forever remaining at Three-Seas Town as a trainee mecha!" From the other end of the communicator came a dark voice, coldly declaring Ling Lan's fate.

# Chapter 236

## Newcomer Matchups!

"If the other really escorted [No Mecha Unrepaired] to Suncreed City, those trainee mecha operators may not be able to handle him," reminded the person reporting, somewhat hesitantly.

"Even many of our intermediate mecha warriors had died on the road to Suncreed, do you think they managed to get to the city alive?" barked the other side in response, "Idiot! It goes without thinking that they failed. That's why that damn rabbit would think to go to the arena fights to gain battle experience..."

"Yes, yes, yes, I'm overthinking it." The contacting person dabbed at the cold sweat on his forehead, regretting his big mouth, as he shut his communicator. He then immediately sent the head's orders out. Subsequently, a considerable number of mecha ported back to enter the mecha combat arena fights...



The moment Ling Lan entered the mecha combat hall, the system delivered an alert, asking her to decide whether to remain anonymous or to make her name public. After some thought, Ling Lan still decided to remain anonymous. It was better to be cautious — even if they really would have to go up against the Thunder King in the end, she wanted to leave enough preparation time for herself.

As Ling Lan was still considered a trainee mecha operator, she could not join the real arena fights yet. In other words, the official arena fights and cross-level challenge fights had nothing to do with her. She could only take things one step at a time, so the ones she would be facing, would be those at the same level as her, the other trainee mecha operator newbies <sup>1</sup>.

The arena fights at Ling Lan's level were called the newcomer matchups. The points awarded for each match were not much, just 1000 points, and there were no additional betting awards. Of course, if she lost, Ling Lan would be deducted 1000 points, once again becoming the penniless pauper she had been at the beginning.

Ling Lan did not think she would lose — this was not blind arrogance, but informed confidence. Of course, she also did not mind that each match would only net her 1000 points — compared to those time-consuming missions earlier, the points she could get here were incomparably greater. Ling Lan was very satisfied with this. Thus, without giving the matter further thought, she instantly submitted a request for a match.

Very soon, the system's voice rang out by Ling Lan's ear, "[Lingtian First-String], welcome to the Mecha World's arena fights. As you are still a trainee mecha, you can only take part in the newcomer matchups (a tournament exclusively for trainee mecha). Entering you into the newcomer matchups' matchmaking system now. Please wait!"

Ling Lan thought that she would have to wait a long time, but surprisingly, it had only been a few seconds when she heard a 'ding!' and the system spoke up again, "Please note, your opponent has been randomly selected by the system — trainee mecha [Dream Butterfly Dance]. Three seconds later, you will be transported to the match arena. There will be 10 seconds of invulnerable protection time. Once the protection disappears, the match officially begins!"

[Dream Butterfly Dance]? Ling Lan's first thought was that the other was a girl, though of course it could also be a more effeminate young man... As Ling Lan was wondering, her mecha's screen suddenly turned dark before lighting up again, and she found herself in a flat plain, endless to the eye, but there were no places to conceal oneself. This meant that this match would be a clash of sheer strength.

The opponent's choice was a flying transformer type mecha — this meant the other was extremely confident in their control skills. Otherwise, they would not have chosen the flying transformer mecha, which had the highest control difficulty coefficient among all the basic mecha. This made Ling Lan's heart sink as she grew serious. If the other was truly a control prodigy, she needed to make sure she would not capsize her boat in a ditch here.

The 10 seconds of protection time went by quickly. Ling Lan was curious about the opponent, and so decided not to attack first. She wanted to see the other's attack — as long as the other made a move, she would be able to tell how strong the opponent was.

The opponent's first decision was to transform, and then piloting their mecha to fly

into the air, they chose to launch a long-range attack. This was the most basic strategy of flying transformer mecha. A flying transformer mecha's main advantage was that its long-range attacks were the strongest among all the three basic mecha. Thus, this decision of the opponent was undoubtedly extremely accurate.

With a "bam", Ling Lan operated her mecha to leap away. A light beam exploded at the spot where she had just been standing, sending countless amounts of dust and dirt into the air. As she leapt, Ling Lan was already on the lookout for the opponent's following attacks, but unexpectedly, after failing in their first attack, the other chose to retreat once more, pulling a distance away from her. This caused Ling Lan to become rather disappointed.

Just in that last attack alone, the opponent had already made three mistakes. One, during the flying transformer mecha's first long-range attack, they should not have aimed at where she had been standing; instead, they should have considered where she would dodge to — this was called prediction. Of course, if one did not have enough confidence in one's predictive ability, one could fire multiple shots towards several potential areas where she could dodge to. This was one of the requisite abilities of a long-range attacker. However, the opponent had not done so, only using a common mecha operator's most basic shooting skill, firing some beams and calling it a day.

Two, even if the flying mecha did not have any predictive ability, they could have watched where she was dodging to and followed up by firing consecutive attacks after her. This would pressure the opponent, giving the opponent no chance to counterattack, only able to dodge reactively.

Three, an experienced flying transformer mecha would know to maintain distance with their target during attacks. However, when she had dodged, she had caused the distance between the two of them to already be very far. The rabbit mecha's long-range weapons were completely incapable of striking the opponent, so it was completely unnecessary for the other to be so cautious and give up on attacking to put even more distance between them.

Without question, whether in terms of basic control, or in terms of decision-making, the opponent was green beyond green. It could be said that, based on the other's control skills, they were not at all qualified to operate a flying transformer mecha with its high difficulty coefficient. If Ling Lan was asked to advise, she would say that the other should obediently stick to operating bestial mecha, mastering the basic controls before choosing other types of mecha.

Ling Lan had been able to tell the opponent's base line from just one attack. Initially somewhat interested, Ling Lan instantly lost the mood to continue dragging things out with the other. And so, Ling Lan activated all the engines of the rabbit mecha — the rabbit leapt and ran as if it were airborne, like an arrow; the opponent's attacks had no way of keeping up with this speed. Seeing the other coming closer and closer, the opponent started to panic, actually turning to run away desperately... but in the next second, they suddenly found that they could no longer see the rabbit's figure in their mecha's screen. What in the world was this?

The opponent did not dare to move recklessly, quickly stopping the mecha and carefully scanning for signs of the rabbit mecha. But before they could look closely, the mainframe of their mecha began blaring a warning, "Danger!"

They only managed to hear this one warning, and then they immediately felt their mecha being struck by a tremendous force — they were almost rattled unconscious by the collision, and then their mecha's screen turned black. Closely following that was a notification from the system's voice, "Your vital point was struck by the opponent, causing your mecha to explode instantly resulting in your death. Please choose whether to continue to the next round or to leave..."

They had actually died? How the heck did they die? The flying mecha chose to continue to the next match, but selected the option for a temporary rest to reorganise. They then immediately looked up the battle feed of the fight between the rabbit mecha and them, and finally found out how they had died.

Apparently, the rabbit mecha had already ducked below him, going into the blind spot of their mecha. Then, with a powerful leap, the other had charged into the air from below, using that extremely characteristic red carrot to violate their chrysanthemum 2...

"How despicable!" [Dream Butterfly Dance] could not help but slam their hand onto the control panel. That image of violating her chrysanthemum was really too sleazy and revolting. As a girl, she really could not accept this. At this moment, hatred towards the rabbit surged within her heart — the other's attack was just so humiliating...

An angry woman often could not be reasoned with!

Ling Lan did not know that due to her desire for efficiency, she had actually incited the

hatred of a girl. Right now, she was waiting for her next match — even though she had already obtained 1000 points from her first fight, she would need at least 100,000 points to redeem the worst lower mecha. This was just the first step of her long journey — she needed to win at least 100 consecutive matches to obtain these 100,000 points.

Very soon, the system notified her that a new challenger had been found — the trainee mecha operator [ All-Rounded Expert <sup>3</sup> ]. As before, she would be transported to the battlefield three seconds later.

[All-Rounded Expert]? It looked like this person was very confident, actually daring to pick such a name. Ling Lan looked at the name and began to deduce the other's personality.

This was a habit she had picked up from Instructor Number Five. Number Five liked to manipulate the opponent, so would often approach from unexpected angles to dig out some secrets. For example, words or phrases the opponent liked to use, or perhaps some pet names or nicknames they gave themselves — oftentimes, these fine details would be a surprisingly accurate reflection of their inner heart. Of course, this did not exclude the possibility of there being some masters of deception who were good at pretending, purposefully spouting some nonsense or naming themselves based on completely irrelevant things. For those people, one needed to use reverse psychology to figure them out.

The battlefield she was transported to was still an endless plain, exactly the same as in the previous match. This made Ling Lan suspect whether this was the only battlefield for the newcomer matchups. If her suspicions were correct, then the system probably did not think highly of the combat between newcomers. The system must have reckoned that newcomers would not be able to use their environment to do anything, and so had set this unchanging flat plain as the battlefield.

"Haha, who knew I'd be so lucky! Actually running into the rabbit mecha the team had sent out an alert telling us to target!" Taunting laughter rang out by Ling Lan's ears, extremely wild and uninhibited.

Ling Lan frowned and looked over to see a humanoid mecha standing conspicuously not too far away from her. Slung casually over its shoulder was a huge metal cleaver, and the mecha just stood there relaxed, not at all vigilant, no sign at all of the tension of someone here to participate in a match.

Ling Lan could not help but snort softly. This fellow was really asking for death — being so loose and careless in front of an opponent, pretty much no combat standards at all.

In Ling Lan's eyes, the other's entire body was full of openings. It could be said that, if she attacked, Ling Lan could definitely kill the other in one second without breaking a sweat. She had initially thought she would encounter a mecha operator of a better standard, but it was unexpectedly another weakling-fodder... this made Ling Lan rather disappointed once again. Although Ling Lan wanted to gather points as fast as she could, she also wanted to find an opponent worthy of a fight, and not these trash who had not even passed the mecha control basics.

These past few years, she had trained long and hard. Whether in terms of physical combat skills or mecha combat, Ling Lan had always harboured a deep respect for all combat arts in her heart. Seeing the opponent being so flippant and irreverent, she was filled with extreme dislike.



# Chapter 237

## Combat Style!

After the 10-second protection period, Ling Lan did not wait for her opponent to make the first move like in her previous match. Ling Lan believed that [All-Rounded Expert]'s irreverent attitude made him unqualified to even operate a mecha into battle.

Thus, Ling Lan operated her rabbit mecha to leap forwards without any hesitation. With a powerful spring, her mecha flew like an arrow parallel to the ground. In an instant, she had removed the carrot-sword from the rabbit's mouth and swung it forwards fiercely, drawing a brilliant red trail of light through the air, slashing at the cockpit of the humanoid mecha.

"Warning! Danger!" The other's mainframe only had time to give this one warning before the initially brightly lit cockpit was plunged into darkness. Then, the system's voice rang out, "You have died in battle. Please choose whether to continue to the next match or to leave?"

[All-Rounded Expert] blew a gasket at this unexpected outcome. He believed that his opponent must definitely have used some illegal controls in this attack, otherwise how could he have been insta-killed in just one move <sup>1</sup> ? This rabbit was really too despicable! No wonder the team had sent out a kill order on it. Hmph, and to think he had even felt sorry for the other...

[All-Rounded Expert] decided that he would go back and seek the other out again to teach him a good lesson, letting the other understand that one could not live in such a despicable manner. [All-Rounded Expert] chose to withdraw from the matchups and look up his own battle records, trying to seek out information on that rabbit. Unexpectedly, the other had chosen to remain anonymous. This further cemented [All-Rounded Expert]'s belief that the other had come prepared to use some underhanded rule-breaking methods to rob him of his points. He was filled with indignant rage, immediately raising an objection to the mecha world's system, hoping that the system would disqualify the other's win. Not only that, he also complained that the other had used illegal methods which broke the system's rules.

Very quickly, the system responded. The system judged the match valid; [All-Rounded Expert]'s objection was refuted. Furthermore, the contents of his complaint were judged by the system as groundless assumption, a form of false accusation.

With regards to false accusations, the punishment was extremely severe both in the real world and in the virtual world. [All-Rounded Expert] was immediately deducted 2000 points, and was given a 10-match ban by the system. This outcome made [All-Rounded Expert] even more infuriated. Mad from anger, he could not control himself, curses and profanities pouring endlessly from his mouth. And then, a greater tragedy occurred — this behaviour of [All-Rounded Expert] made the virtual world system kick him out, along with the notification that he had been banned from entering the virtual world for 3 days.

[All-Rounded Expert] stared at the red-worded warning on his screen and kicked open the virtual world login pod in a towering rage. Crawling out from it, he roared, "Blasted mainframe! I'm so pissed off!"

Right then, the hatch of the login pod beside his suddenly opened. A young man sat up from inside and asked with a baffled expression, "Qiao Lin, why have you come out? No wonder I could not find you in the mecha world."

He had tried to contact [All-Rounded Expert] in the mecha world, but was informed by the system that the other was unreachable. Out of worry, he had then decided to go offline to check on the other, and sure enough, the other had left the virtual world.

Qiao Lin looked at the other and then, as if finding a confidant, he immediately broke out into a rant telling the other everything that had happened in the mecha world.

The other youth frowned slightly, disagreeing with Qiao Lin's point of view. He said, "Since the mainframe did not find anything wrong with the other, that means the other didn't cheat. Perhaps you just took your opponent too lightly."

Qiao Lin retorted angrily, "How could that be? Even if I did not take the other seriously, as peer trainee mecha operators, is it possible for him to insta-kill me? It's not like I entered a cross-grade challenge match." At the heart of it, he just could not believe that he could be killed instantly by a trainee mecha operator of the same level. He could not accept this outcome.

At these words, the other youth paused. Knowing that Qiao Lin could not accept this

result, he tried to counsel him gently, "It's likely that the other is a hacker, and did something the mainframe cannot see through. Your anger is wasted for now. Why not save it and look for a chance to take revenge in the future?"

Although the youth was comforting Qiao Lin this way, a trace of disagreement could be seen on his face. The mecha world was renowned to be the most secure virtual world — hackers would never be able to manipulate anything inside it unless they were the even more terrifying spectres. However, spectres relied on directly damaging an opponent's spiritual power to obtain victory... seeing Qiao Lin's hysterically exuberant demeanour right now, that possibility could be excluded. The truth was very likely as he had guessed — Qiao Lin had been too careless and, by sheer fluke, this insta-kill was the outcome.

If Qiao Lin had not been the Thunder King Qiao Ting's younger brother, he would not have even bothered with these comforting words. Glancing at the bristling Qiao Lin, he could not help but sigh. Even though they were brothers with the same bloodline, their talents were completely incomparable. The Thunder King Qiao Ting was the prodigious mecha operator in the limelight, while Qiao Lin was an incapable fool, only able to bank on his elder brother's reputation to act like a prince...

After spending a little more time consoling Qiao Lin, the youth then said goodbye to the other and laid back into the virtual login pod. In that instant before the login pod closed, a mocking smirk suddenly appeared on the initially discontented face of Qiao Lin...



Over the next two days, a piece of news went viral among the lower mecha operators. In the newcomer matchups, a particular trainee rabbit mecha had consecutively killed over 40 other newcomer trainee mecha operators in one day, immediately leaping to the top of the newcomer rankings.

40 consecutive victories was not any great news — many people before this had also achieved this type of results. Though of course these people did not accomplish it in one day...

Indeed, in terms of time, the rabbit mecha's achievement was rather remarkable, but this was not the reason for the uproar. The reason why the entire mecha world was so shaken, was that this rabbit mecha had managed one-hit kills against opponents of the

same level. Not just once, or twice, but every single time. These results were certainly unprecedented — though it could not be known whether this feat would not be replicated in the future, within the near future at least, no one could do the same...

Moreover, this was not some cross-grade arena fight, where it was easy to get a one-hit kill due to the great difference in strength between the two fighters' levels. In a newcomer matchup, as both sides were newcomers, it was very rare to see such an overwhelming difference between participants. Many people suspected that the rabbit mecha must have stayed back at the mecha training hall to keep polishing its basic controls, waiting until it was honed to the max before entering the mecha world<sup>2</sup>. This would explain why its strength was so high.

Of course, there were also people who suspected that this was the alternate account of some expert. However, this supposition was soon outright refuted by the official authorities, because the mecha world did not allow alternate accounts. Every person's brainwaves and spiritual power was unique, and they used that to login to the virtual world, so it was impossible for someone to have a second account.

Even hackers with spiritual self-mutations or spectres could not modify their brainwaves and spiritual power to establish a new account. They could only use shielding methods to hide their true identities from the system. However, they too could not change the facts, for example, changing their level from a mecha expert to a trainee mecha operator...

The declaration from the authorities only escalated the matter further. More and more people were leaning towards the idea that the rabbit mecha had trained within the training hall for several years to achieve this grand debut. In the meantime, the rabbit mecha did not stop its winning streak. In the second day, 60 people fell to its sword, pushing its total victories to 100 matches. Each and every one of these 100 matches were finished with one-hit kills.

This achievement caused those lower level mecha operators to grow even wilder — many of them were filled with regret for not training properly in their basic control, for not appreciating their first mecha, for switching over to a better mecha before they were fully familiar with their first mecha. Quite a number of people began idolising the rabbit mecha, even believing that one day, he would become the most talented mecha operator of the Federation... it was highly likely that another prodigy like Ling Xiao had appeared.

On the third day, just as everyone was eagerly anticipating the rabbit mecha's continued victory streak, they found that they could no longer see any sign of the rabbit mecha in the newcomer matchups... just when everyone was boggled by this, someone calculated the rabbit mecha's points and found that the points from the 100 consecutive wins was enough for the rabbit mecha to advance to lower mecha operator.

In other words, the rabbit mecha could now join the lowest tier of cross-grade challenges. Many people assumed that the rabbit mecha would definitely participate in a cross-grade challenge, but soon found that the mysterious rabbit mecha had truly disappeared from the entire arena. It was as if its fervent battle exploits of the previous two days were just a dream, a mass hallucination.



"Li Lanfeng, you've recently been researching the combat methods of the rabbit mecha. Did you find anything?" In the 4th year dorms, the regular visitor Zhao Jun, who came to see Li Lanfeng studying those videos again, could not help but ask.

"Just as everyone is saying, their basic control is close to perfect. Not a single move is wasted. It's so clean and efficient that it's scary," replied Li Lanfeng with a serious expression.

"Looks like, the other's combat style is very similar to yours!" Zhao Jun understood Li Lanfeng. His good friend was also someone who pursued the perfection of basic controls. This was the reason why Li Lanfeng had still not yet advanced to special-class operator. Staying as an advanced mecha warrior for two years was so that he could train in the advanced mecha warrior basic controls until he mastered them till perfection. Otherwise, Li Lanfeng's current mecha level would have already been the same as his. Two years' time was enough for him to peek into the doorway to the secrets of ace operators.

Zhao Jun had always thought that Li Lanfeng had a sort of problematic obsession with basic controls; he himself did not think much of it. Everyone knew that the more advanced a mecha operator was, the more complex the manoeuvres they could learn would be, with a corresponding greater power. Many people would not want to waste time on the basic controls of lower mecha — in Zhao Jun's eyes, the basic controls of each level need only be learned until one was familiar with them; it was completely unnecessary to hone them till perfection. Zhao Jun was of the firm opinion that Li

Lanfeng was wasting his time.

However, Zhao Jun would not force Li Lanfeng to change his ways. Compared to Li Lanfeng's mecha control skills, he trusted and valued the other more for his brains and strategic mind. In fact, he felt that Li Lanfeng was better suited to be a strategist rather than a full-time mecha operator.

"Yes, this style is indeed very similar..." mused Li Lanfeng, who seemed to be recalling something, his gaze distant.

"Could this be someone from your sect?" asked Zhao Jun jokingly, still remembering Li Lanfeng mention before that the perfect mastery of basic controls was the hard-and-fast rule of his sect.

At these words, Li Lanfeng blinked, startled, as if realising something. He very quickly regained his composure though, to say, "Zhao Jun, you have finally said something useful. Perhaps, that rabbit mecha really has some relation with our sect."

# Chapter 238

## Phoenix Thrall Fate!

"Really?" Zhao Jun's interest was hooked. He quickly said, "Then, you should ask the people of your sect, see who's the one who most recently entered the mecha world. Ask him to level up quickly. Damn my hands are itching for a fight with him."

Li Lanfeng glanced at Zhao Jun with a half-smile and did not reply to his words, instead bringing up another topic, "I hear the Thunder King is in Closed Door Meditation. Once he succeeds, he will advance to become an ace operator. You probably won't have a chance to fight him anymore."

As if being doused by a bucket of water, Zhao Jun's initial excitement vanished. He rubbed fiercely at his strong face and said sulkily, "Dammit, that fellow really isn't human. I just became familiar with special-class mecha and built up the confidence to go fight him, and he goes ahead and advances to ace? Is the gap between us really that wide, that I'm unable to catch up no matter how I chase?"

Zhao Jun was rather discouraged — he himself was considered someone with great talent in mecha control, but compared to the Thunder King Qiao Ting, he was still weaker by a hair, forever chasing with all his might behind the other. He had finally caught up this year with great difficulty, at last seeing the chance to fight the other evenly, but immediately found himself being left behind yet again. This feeling was very mentally damaging. Mind you, even now, he had not managed to even touch the gateway to the profound secrets of ace level.

"Not human? Wide gap? You think too highly of him." A trace of contempt appeared on Li Lanfeng's lips, as if he did not consider the Thunder King much of a threat.

"Saying that... you don't think he's going to advance this time?" Li Lanfeng's words made the low-spirited Zhao Jun revive instantly. Zhao Jun really deferred to Li Lanfeng's judgement. If the other failed to advance, it would prove that he had not been left too far behind by the other.

"I did not say that. Whether or not he can advance, depends on his capabilities, and also, luck." As he spoke, Li Lanfeng flashed a half-smile and a teasing gaze. This

expression made Zhao Jun's attention waver involuntarily for a moment...

Zhao Jun hurriedly gathered his emotions, forcing his eyes away from Li Lanfeng's gaze, shifting his vision to one side. Damn, what kind of spiritual mutation was this exactly? It was too lethal — many times, he would be struck uncontrollably, losing his focus and dropping his guard in an instant. If Li Lanfeng was his enemy, he would have long been dead several times over... of course, only he knew a thing or two about this ability of Li Lanfeng's. Before outsiders, Li Lanfeng was still very restrained, never activating this particular ability.

Regaining control of himself, Zhao Jun turned his full attention onto the Thunder King. Through gritted teeth, he said, "Right! We still need to look at luck! Damn, I hope his luck is blastedly terrible this time, that he doesn't manage to advance."

"Rather than pinning your hopes on that fickle and uncertain luck, you might as well go and properly study your mecha control and try to elevate your realm as soon as possible... even if the Thunder King fails this time, he won't be staying as a special-class operator for long," Li Lanfeng reminded Zhao Jun kindly.

Li Lanfeng knew well that Qiao Ting's advancement to ace operator was just a matter of time. If he was lucky, he may just advance to ace operator tomorrow — and even if his luck was terrible, in the two years before graduation, even if he had to grind, he would have grinded his way up to ace operator level.

"I've got it. I'll go now to the mecha world. Not going to waste a single minute..." Li Lanfeng's reminder made Zhao Jun feel the pressure bearing down on him. Losing the interest to keep nattering on with Li Lanfeng, he immediately went back to login to the virtual world to study his mecha control. The only path to advancement was to train hard and break past one's own control limits.

Li Lanfeng sent Zhao Jun off with a smile. When he was the only one left in the room, his initially warm and smiling gaze gradually turned cold and focused, with a trace of anxiety hidden deep within it.

Li Lanfeng looked once more at the rabbit mecha on the screen. And right at that moment, the rabbit mecha once more blew up its opponent's mecha cleanly and efficiently, proudly turning to leave the match arena. That calm indifference towards victory was so familiar that it made his heart ache. Li Lanfeng's fists curled up tight involuntarily. "Who are you really? Is it him? No, he would not have stopped where he



was 7 years ago. But that style is so like him... could it be a junior brother or junior sister from his sect? Or perhaps his disciple?"

Li Lanfeng instantly made a decision. He would definitely find this rabbit mecha and find out for sure whether he had any relation to that person he had known back then...

If he was lucky enough to find him... the anxiety and nervousness in Li Lanfeng's heart suddenly eased a little, the courage inside him rising up once more. Yes, as long as he could find the other, as long as he was willing to teach him again, he would have the confidence not to lose against that so-called destined life <sup>1</sup>!

Right then, Li Lanfeng could not help but recall the dawn of several days back, when his grandfather had called...

Li Lanfeng, who had just woken up and was washing up, had received a rare video call from his grandpa. Li Lanfeng had been a little startled. Mind you, ever since he had been accepted by the First Men's Military Academy, in order to prevent his identity from being exposed, his grandfather had almost cut off all communications with him. Moreover, he had been shunted from being the inheritor of the main family, to become a branch disciple who was performing acceptably. He had then been living a low-key life at the First Men's Military Academy for four years.

"Grandpa, why are you contacting me?" After his grandfather had hinted that this call would not cause any trouble, Li Lanfeng finally relaxed to ask.

"Lan-er <sup>2</sup>, I hope you can ascend to special-class mecha as soon as possible..." The Li family patriarch's expression was rather grim.

Li Lanfeng was gobsmacked at these words. "Why? Grandpa?"

A few years back, Li Lanfeng had once told his grandfather that a mecha expert in the mecha world had instructed him on the importance of the basic mecha controls. Furthermore, he had already tasted the fruits of mastering the basics — if he truly did well with them, he could even manage a cross-grade challenge. His grandfather had been extremely supportive regarding the matter. So why would he suddenly make such a request today? It should be known that he was still that little bit away from fully mastering the basic controls of advanced mecha warrior level. This was why he had kept staying back instead of advancing to special-class operator.

"A few days ago, I asked the Zhuge family head to help read your fortune. The signs

show that that king is already by your side..." Grandfather Li's voice was extremely grave, even a little troubled. "All these years, making you conceal your identity and hide your face, sending you off far away and cultivating you in secret — all of this was to let you become supremely strong, so you would have the capability of changing your destiny... now the signs have shown that that person has appeared. There is no more time for you to slowly accumulate your strength. If you are not strong enough, and catch his eye, how will you escape your destined Phoenix Thrall Fate?"

Li Lanfeng heard that the king had emerged and his heart jolted. His brow became deeply furrowed, and when he heard that annoying Phoenix Thrall Fate being mentioned again, he could not help but clench his fists tightly. His fingernails almost broke through the skin of his palms, but that minor pain was nothing compared to the rage brewing in his heart.

Every direct descendant inheritor of the Li family would always have the family head of the Emyreal Zhuge divine their life fate, to better determine the cultivation pathway best suited for their destinies.

From birth, he had been assessed to have astounding talent. His grandfather had been overjoyed, thinking that he would become the most outstanding prodigy of the Li family, but the Phoenix Thrall Fate reading of the Emyreal Zhuge had instantly slammed him down from the skies into the dust... this was also why he could not appear blatantly in front of the other Li family members, because the first inheritor of the Li family definitely could not become some king's plaything. The Li family could not suffer that disgrace...

His grandfather had been too soft-hearted though, at the same time unwilling to give up on his talent, and thus had decisively hidden away this reading. His grandfather had then announced to the public that his talent was not good, and sent him off to the third-rate planet Azure. To the outside, his grandfather appeared to be letting him while away in obscurity, to live or die on his own merits, but in truth, his grandfather was spending a lot of effort in cultivating him. If not for these arrangements by his grandfather, he would long have been confined within the family's forbidden district by the other Li family members. They would wait for him to grow up, then deliver him right into that king's hands to become the other's personal plaything, to trade some favours for the Li family...

Li Lanfeng could not help but snort in his heart. What goddamn Phoenix Thrall Fate? He was a man! How could he ever submit and lie below another man's body <sup>3</sup>? Even if

the other was a king with unparalleled strength, he would not submit to fate. He had trained hard to improve himself, racking his mind to plot and plan, all for the sake of going against the heavens to change this fate. He had gotten so far; he was definitely not going to give up now.

Although his grandfather's words made Li Lanfeng fearful and indignant, they did not make him lose his cool. He replied softly, "Grandpa, I understand. Don't worry, I will arrange everything. In just a little more time, I believe I will be able to advance to special-class mecha operator level."

"As long as you know what you're doing." Grandpa Li was silent for a moment before reminding, "Lan-er, be wary of the strong people that appear by your side this year, or perhaps those geniuses advancing to ace operator this year. Your destined king may very likely be among them. Keep your distance from them as much as possible. Don't let the other become interested in you..."

Li Lanfeng smiled bitterly and said, " Looking like this, how could someone still have interest in me <sup>4</sup>?"

Had grandpa become overly caught up in that reading? Honestly speaking, he had always been sceptical — was the reading really that accurate? If it were that accurate, then why would the Zhuge family head cooperate with his grandfather to try and help him go against the heavens and change his fate?

Grandpa Li fell silent once more. How could he tell his grandson that, at times, interest in someone was not purely due to appearance? It could be due to attitude, behaviour, or perhaps one's way of handling things..."In any case, you have to be careful!" That said, he hung up and ended the video call.

After hanging up, the Li family head on planet Doha had a trace of contemplation on his grim and weathered face. He was thinking back on the reading by the Empyrean Zhuge — *peeking out from under the dazzling Phoenix Thrall Fate was an undefined Supreme Commander Fate* — if not for that last half of the reading, he would not have invested so much to arrange for his grandson to defy his fate, even if his potential had been so astonishing...

"Grandpa has helped you as much as I can. Now it's all up to you to choose." The family head of the Li family sighed softly, gaze distant as he looked out the window. For him, the best outcome was undoubtedly for his grandson to become a supreme

commander.

Li Lanfeng looked at the blank screen with a deep frown, thinking, *"Who could that king be? Rumour has it that the Thunder King is about to advance to ace operator? Looks like it's about time to think of a way to restrict the Thunder King's faction."*

# Chapter 239

## Slaughter a Chicken to Strike Fear into the Monkeys?

Ling Lan patted the humanoid lower mecha she had just redeemed. The entire outer shell of the mecha was dark grey — although it was not particularly eye-catching, the mecha was a great improvement from her previous one whether in terms of durability and safety or weapons.

It not only had a beam energy gun with extremely high destructive power, it also possessed a high alloy steel broadsword. Two sai <sup>1</sup> hung at the back of its waist, while high alloy steel short swords were hidden in compartments at the side of its thighs — their tensile strength completely beyond what the short swords of trainee mecha could offer. However, it was still lower mecha at the end of the day, so it still did not have the right to carry a beam saber. But Ling Lan no longer needed a beam saber anyway, because she now had the primary cold weapon Regretless which was 100 times better than any common beam saber. She could use it until she became an ace mecha operator without any worry.

After she was done admiring this lower mecha that now belonged to her, Ling Lan finally pressed the remote control button in her hands. The initially closed hatch of the mecha cockpit swung open — Ling Lan did not choose to use an escalator, instead leaping up with a dash to clamber up the mecha with light touches of her hands and feet. She flew swiftly upwards in this manner, ending up seated within the cockpit in the blink of an eye.

Ling Lan casually closed the cockpit and activated the mecha, waiting for all of its systems to come online. Only then did she operate her mecha to login to her personal space and execute several basic movements. The controls felt much smoother than that of the trainee mecha — if she had used this current mecha to escort [No Mecha Unrepaired] to Suncreed City, Ling Lan believed that even without weapons, just relying on the ability of this mecha alone, she would have been able to finish off those few large snakes bare-handed.

After familiarising herself with the controls for a period of time, Ling Lan drew out

Regretless from her backpack with satisfaction, and unequipped the lower mecha's basic cold weapon, the common high alloy steel broadsword. Since she already had a better weapon, Ling Lan would of course use it. She would only be able to use Regretless to its full capabilities if she came to know it as well as her own arms.

Ling Lan stashed the high alloy steel broadsword into her backpack <sup>2</sup>. Recalling how, not too long ago, she had treasured the carrot-sword which wasn't even as good as the high alloy steel broadsword, Ling Lan could not help but sigh to herself. Humans were just so fickle, casting away the old for the new... seeing something better, they would heartlessly abandon that which was worse. It was truly heartless.

After that bout of sentimentality — Ling Lan so rarely giving free rein to her so-called female tendency of overthinking things — Ling Lan then calmly chose to enter the mecha world. As Ling Lan had already switched to a humanoid lower mecha and Three-Seas Town was half-teeming with mecha of the same type, her appearance did not attract any of the townsfolk's attention.

Since she had converted to a new mecha, Ling Lan no longer had any interest in abusing those newbies at the mecha combat hall. She felt that it was time to contact Qi Long and the others. Thus, Ling Lan entered the name [Lingtian Combat] into the system and sent a friend request over.

Very quickly, [Lingtian Combat] had accepted her friend request. At the same time, the mecha's mainframe suddenly said, "[Lingtian Combat] is requesting communications, YES or NO?"

Heh, what a quick response! Ling Lan of course agreed, and then a voice loud enough to shatter her eardrums rang out in her cockpit, "Boss, you've finally contacted me!" It was Qi Long's unapologetically loud voice.

At the same time, the system's voice began ringing out constantly by Ling Lan's ear, sounding out ding after ding of notification. [Lingtian Abacus], [Lingtian Parcel], [Lingtian Sharp Blade], [Lingtian Substitute] <sup>3</sup> requesting to add you as a friend...

Ling Lan decisively approved all these requests. She knew who they were — [Lingtian Abacus] was Han Jijyun, [Lingtian Parcel] was Lin Zhong-qing, [Lingtian Sharp Blade] was Luo Lang, so [Lingtian Substitute] was undoubtedly Xie Yi then <sup>4</sup>.

Of course, as Ling Lan approved the requests, she was complaining internally. This

group of idiots — what kind of stupid names were they choosing for themselves? No standards whatsoever.

After Ling Lan had finished approving everyone, Qi Long dragged the others into the comms channel as well. Then, Qi Long could be heard to ask excitedly, "Boss Lan, was that rabbit you?"

Ling Lan was startled, "What rabbit?"

"That rabbit which killed other mecha of the same level in one move! Those 100 newcomer matchups, we've all seen them!" Qi Long's tone was hinting strongly that she should stop hiding; Ling Lan's skills in mecha control were known by all of them here, other than the last to join them, Xie Yi.

"It's not!" Ling Lan denied firmly. She would never admit that adorkable rabbit was her — this would affect her great and formidable image too much.

Ling Lan's resolute denial left Qi Long speechless. In his mind, only Ling Lan was capable of operating a trainee mecha to achieve instakills. This had always been Ling Lan's style — hadn't he advanced to the top 5 at the Central Scout Academy in precisely this manner? In the end, Ling Lan had encountered himself and Luo Lang, which was the only reason why he had not progressed further.

"If it's not Boss, then who else could it be? I cannot imagine anyone else able to do this," Luo Lang was equally sceptical.

"Alright, since Boss Lan doesn't want to talk about the matter of the rabbit mecha, let's not ask anymore!" Han Jijyun stepped in to stop them decisively. Of course, he too did not believe Ling Lan's denial — in his eyes, this was already an irrefutable fact. However, since Boss Lan did not want to mention it, he must have his reasons. Han Jijyun did not want to trouble Ling Lan.

Although Han Jijyun had put a stop to the topic, Ling Lan could still tell from their demeanours that no one had believed her words. Still, at this point, all she could do was stiffen her jaw and continue to lie through her teeth. She would never admit the rabbit mecha was her anyway; as for what Qi Long and the others wanted to think, that was not something she could control.

Qi Long and the others could not wait to meet up with Ling Lan. Considering that she already had a lower mecha and since she had a record at Suncreed City, which allowed

her to transport directly to the city, Ling Lan suggested they meet up there.

Unexpectedly, this suggestion made the few of them whoop in glee. Qi Long in particular was laughing uproariously as he said, "It's like I said, who else could... be but Boss?" Though Qi Long mumbled through part of his sentence, Ling Lan could tell without even thinking about it that Qi Long was most definitely talking about the rabbit mecha.

"What? Is something wrong with Suncreed City?" asked Ling Lan curiously.

"It's like this. Suncreed City is the capital of the strong. Only those mecha operators who have managed to break through Suncreed Passage from the various newbie towns have the right to enter Suncreed City..." explained Han Jijyun, "Each newbie town has 4 passages, each leading to a different city. Three of the passages have a lower difficulty level — as long as one takes things step by step, one will be able to enter each of the various cities. But the final passage of every town will lead to Suncreed City. Suncreed City is very unique in the mecha world. It can only be accessed by breaking through the passages in the newbie towns. Those who entered the other cities from the other passages have no way of getting to Suncreed City from those other cities."

"So, any mecha operator who can get into Suncreed City is exceptionally strong. Suncreed City is also the mecha holy land in all the mecha operators' minds. Not only are there many missions there, it holds all kinds of weapons and equipment, as well as houses all the temples where the various occupations need to go to advance to special-class. Like for us mecha operators, to advance to special-class operator from advanced mecha warrior, we need to be evaluated at Suncreed City," added Luo Lang.

"So that's how it is... but that passage to Suncreed City really wasn't that hard. As long as one learns how to operate mecha properly, anyone can pass," said Ling Lan airily.

"How is it that simple? Even an advanced mecha warrior may not be able to pass through! Thinking back, our group was wiped out three times on that road before passing by sheer luck," said Qi Long with an expression of remembered fear. It was clear to see how challenging that passage to Suncreed City had been for them.

"Even if the passage to Suncreed City is a little difficult, if you can't get past it yourself, just hire an expert to help and the matter is solved." Ling Lan did not believe that everyone in Suncreed City had all really fought their way through — like that [No



Mecha Unrepaired], hadn't he been escorted to the city by her?

"Which expert would be willing to bring along a burden when trying to break through the passage? The more people there are, the more savage beasts there will be to match the numbers, and they will also be stronger as well. Besides that, only people who have never beaten Suncreed Passage before can attempt it. People like us who have already gone through it have no way of entering the passage again."

Han Jijyun recounted the restrictions of the Suncreed City Passage. This was also why life-skills players typically could not get into Suncreed City unless they joined an organisation, faction, family, or something along those lines which could arrange things and expend great effort so that some of the more talented life-skills players could be brought into Suncreed City to develop.

Hearing all this, Ling Lan could not help but sigh that she had lost out. If she had known earlier that going to Suncreed City was such a difficult hurdle, she would not have been so hesitant to accept [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s weapon, Regretless.

Very quickly, the six of them had gathered at Suncreed City. Seeing the five silver-blue humanoid mecha before her with their elegant forms, Ling Lan once again looked at her own dark and slightly bulky mecha body, and was instantly troubled... this scene was absolutely just like an ugly duckling running into a group of swans.

Meanwhile, this scene indeed made some advanced mecha warriors or special-class mecha operators look askance at the group. However, they just assumed that the lower mecha must have been brought to the city by these advanced mecha warriors. This lower mecha was so enviably fortunate, just like that intermediate mecha a couple days back.

"These few days that I've been immersed in the mecha world, has anything happened outside?" This was the first thing Ling Lan asked when she met Qi Long and the others. For some reason, she was feeling rather unsettled, feeling as if something was about to happen.

"Indeed, the situation outside has not been quite right these past couple days." In contrast to the brash and forthright Qi Long, the meticulous Han Jijyun had indeed noticed something off.

"What's it about?" asked Ling Lan with a frown.

"According to Wu Jiong, someone bullied a person in our new cadet regiment yesterday. Li Yingjie naturally couldn't let that pass, and so led some people to strike back. But when that person left, he warned Li Yingjie to watch himself. His attitude was extremely arrogant — I had already suspected it could be someone from a particular faction at that moment," said Han Jijyun.

"Scouting? Or perhaps provocation? Did you manage to find out which faction the other belongs to?" Ling Lan's expression became focused.

"Wu Jiong later found out that the other seems to have some connection to the Leiting Mecha Clan. That person is an underling of someone within the Leiting Mecha Clan. Right now, I don't know whether this is Leiting's idea or whether that person is acting on his own." That said, Han Jijyun's brow furrowed slightly as well. They had not secured their foothold in the military academy yet, and were already going up against the number one faction's Leiting Mecha Clan <sup>5</sup>... this was undoubtedly extremely disadvantageous for them.

"Leiting? Thunder King?" Ling Lan recalled [No Mecha Unrepaired]'s words and sighed, "Even if this was not Leiting's idea, they will not let this chance go by. I'm afraid that this time, the Thunder King is about to make a move." Slaughter a chicken to strike fear into the monkeys — their new cadet regiment was just too perfect for the role of the chicken.

# Chapter 240

## Leiting's Intentions?

"It shouldn't be. The Thunder King is in Closed Door Meditation right now, preparing to advance to ace operator — he should not have the spare time to bother with this sort of trivial thing," Xie Yi suddenly cut in to say.

News of the Thunder King's Closed Door Meditation to advance to ace operator was pretty much known throughout the whole First Men's Military Academy. Even they as new students had also heard a thing or two about it. After all, such a super talent emerging from the military academy — the news was worthy of being widely promoted.

A thought stirred in Ling Lan's mind at those words. She said hurriedly, "Wait, let me think. This may be an opportunity for us to develop."

Ling Lan's words made the group's eyes light up. They suppressed the excitement in their hearts, afraid that they would disturb Ling Lan's train of thought if they spoke up.

Mind you, the new cadet regiment seemed to be doing well right now, without being especially pressured by the other factions. But in reality, those factions were like a sword hanging above their heads — they were constantly under threat. Because they could not know when those factions would decide to make a move to apply pressure on them, to force them to have no choice but to join those factions in the end.

The students of the Central Scout Academy had always been a bunch of extremely talented students, hence they were all extremely prideful. They were unwilling to go against their personal wishes due to external pressure — this was why they had so quickly reached a consensus to establish the new cadet regiment.

Initially, the Central Scout Academy faction which Zhang Jing-an represented would have been a great haven for them. Unfortunately, the grade that Zhang Jing-an represented was the one who had been defeated by them back then in the grand armed melee. Thus, the new cadets did not want to let someone who had once fallen by their hands to lead them now. At the heart of it, they did not think much of Zhang

Jing-an — this was also one of the reasons why Zhang Jing-an had failed to convince anyone to join his faction.

Of course, Ling Lan's existence was another reason why they were unwilling to join Zhang Jing-an's faction. If Ling Lan had not been around, many of them would have at least temporarily joined Zhang Jing-an's faction for security due to the pressure. However, Ling Lan had come to the First Men's Military Academy. In the new cadets' eyes, Ling Lan who had led them to victory in the grand armed melee, and who had successfully snatched the administrative rights of the spaceship, was undoubtedly much more worthy of their trust. This was also one of the reasons why the new cadet regiment was established so successfully.

"Jijyun, tell me, the other side being so open with their provocation, without even trying to hide which faction they came from... is it really only to make an example out of us?" Ling Lan began to suspect the other's motives.

Typically, in order to achieve greater deterrent effect, one side would create a moral high ground for themselves, pushing the responsibility of instigating the conflict to their opponent. In the end, they would further prove their superiority with a one-sided victory — at that moment, riding on the wave of that success, they would find it much easier to attract some exceptional new cadets into their ranks...

However, Leiting had acted in a rather impatient manner this time. They were obviously trying to incite the anger of the new cadets as quickly as they could — their methods crude and rough. Even if they won in the end, Leiting would still incur the bad reputation of picking on the weak and bullying the freshmen. This may end up making the other uninvolved new cadets grow worried, afraid that they would be bullied as well, and would instead negatively affect Leiting's efforts in recruitment. It just did not make sense no matter how Ling Lan thought about it.

"If not, then for what reason? Could it be that they simply want to beat us into submission to make us join them?" Jijyun could not think of any other explanation. "Although we have more people, it is still far from the numbers of all the new cadets. Every year, the military academy takes in up to 7000 new cadets."

Something abruptly occurred to Ling Lan at Han Jijyun's words. She suddenly asked seriously, "What if, they knew the assessment results of us new cadets?"

The results of the new cadets' assessments would be recorded in the students'

respective files, and these results would affect the mentorship and material resources the military academy would invest into the cultivation of the individual students. In fact, it was already being reflected in reality now. Their group of students had all been placed into the best classes of their respective specializations, having access to the best teachers as well as the best material resources in their studies and training.

For example, in Ling Lan's Mecha Piloting Class-A, not only were the various instructional teachers all the most outstanding in that field, even the teachers in charge of the practicum portion were all mecha operators of ace level and above. Not only that, when it came to the distribution of the real-world training mecha, the students would often be given one of the best mecha the school had to offer. Of course, how good of a mecha would still depend on how well they performed in their virtual mecha training practices.

At these words, Han Jijyun seemed to think of something, and his expression shifted slightly, "The other side has our new cadet assessment results? There's a hacker..." The military academy had a specialised hacker training class, so it was extremely believable that there would be hackers within the various factions.

"Won't the military academy have put up proper defences?" Knowing well that there were hackers among the students, Han Jijyun would be somewhat dissatisfied with the protective measures of the school if they so easily allowed others to access the information of the new cadets.

"Perhaps, this is also a test the military academy has set for the hacker students." In contrast, Ling Lan did not find it strange — defences were built to be broken; the only difference was in whether others succeeded in breaking through or not.

Ling Lan's words enlightened Han Jijyun; this was a distinct possibility. In order to spur a hacker into putting their all into cracking a defence, there must be sufficient incentive, and the assessment details of the new cadets were undoubtedly a most attractive prize. After all, even if the hackers themselves were unconcerned, the organisations they belonged to would want it, which gave the hackers no choice but to comply.

"From the looks of things, Boss Lan, your suspicions should be correct. They are not trying to make an example out of us... their real objective is in fact *us*. This fight, it looks like we cannot avoid it." Ling Lan's deduction made Han Jijyun realise the truth of the situation, and he could not help but begin to worry.

"Leiting is determined to get us. That's why even though the Thunder King is in Closed Door Meditation and thus lacking a leader, they still want to make us join them by force as soon as possible. They are afraid the other organisations will also find out about this news and intervene." Ling Lan had basically figured out Leiting's entire purpose by now, "From the looks of it, our assessment results are still unknown to the other factions..."

Right then, Ling Lan instructed Little Four within the mindscape to go to the military academy mainframe and take a look, to see if someone had already broken through its defences to steal their data.

Very swiftly, Little Four returned with an answer. There was indeed someone who had succeeded in accessing the database to download a document with their info. Additionally, that person had left behind a defensive layer of their own. Currently, there were several other hackers working on cracking that defensive layer — based on their progress, they would probably only succeed a week from now and get their information.

Since Ling Lan now knew about this, she naturally let Little Four put extra security around their information. She did not wish for their data to once again be obtained by others. The more people who knew, the more danger the new cadet regiment would be in. This was because they were like infants holding onto treasure chests — without sufficient strength to protect the wealth that belonged to them, their final outcome could only be to watch as others stronger than them came and took it away...

Receiving Ling Lan's orders, Little Four scampered over to handle it. Of course, he patted his puffed up little chest and guaranteed that, in this world, no one would be able to steal the data from under his protection, aside from those in the military academy who had the right to view the data.

"Still, no matter why Leiting is doing this, their challenge towards us this time is not entirely a bad thing for us." After resolving this latent problem, Ling Lan let out an internal sigh of relief. Now, she need only focus on handling Leiting. Even if Leiting was the top faction in the school, as long as it was just one faction, the pressure was much reduced.

An idea flashed through Han Jijyun's mind, and he hurried to agree, "That's right, this clash is indeed not a bad thing for us."

Qi Long's head felt like it was waterlogged from all the subtext embedded in the conversation between his boss and his sworn brother. He could not help but open his mouth to ask, "What in the world are you two talking about? What good thing bad thing?"

In an uncommon turn of events, Han Jijyun did not answer Qi Long's question, instead continuing to say to Ling Lan, "Due to the uncertainty of the situation, the other factions in the military academy are likely waiting to see the results of Leiting's advance on us."

"If we are unable to fend off Leiting's attack, even if we do not want to go to Leiting, it is unavoidable for us to end up joining some other faction. The final outcome of our new cadet regiment would definitely be to split up and be separately absorbed into the other factions," Ling Lan calmly laid out the final outcome of their new cadet regiment, "However, if we can survive this advance, even though we'll be pitted against Leiting, as long as our assessment results are not found out by the other factions, they will not risk fighting against Leiting and angering the Thunder King to intervene. After all, we aren't the only new cadets. They would be perfectly happy to see us at odds with Leiting, each at the other's neck, giving Leiting no mind to bother with the other new cadets, so they would have better luck in their own recruitment."

"Going up against Leiting, although we might very likely lose terribly, it is also an opportunity for us. Leiting can become our opponent, but they will also become our protective talisman." Han Jijyun then added, worried, "But, how can we ensure our data isn't obtained by the other factions?"

"On this matter, don't worry. I will handle it," replied Ling Lan decisively. Only then did Han Jijyun remember that their Boss Lan was most likely an unfathomable hacker — this had already been proven on the spaceship. A smile instantly broke out on his face.

At this time, the others had also figured things out. Xie Yi asked, "Does this mean that, even though things look bad for us, the situation is actually not as terrible as it would seem on the outside?"

Ling Lan shook her head, "Well, we can't say that. At most, the chances of winning and losing are half and half."

That said, Ling Lan turned her head to look at Han Jijyun and instructed, "Jijyun, go and contact the regiment commanders of the new cadet regiment <sup>1</sup>. Ask them to gather

at our villa. Since we have decided, we need to let them know."

"Yes! Boss," replied Han Jijyun. However, he was still a little concerned as he asked, "What if this makes them cower?" This was not like during the grand armed melee — Leiting's strength and numbers really exceeded theirs by too much. Furthermore, they had just arrived at the academy, and had not yet properly established their foothold. It was a legitimate concern that many of the new cadets would be plagued with doubt and fear.

"Just tell them first. If they don't want to be involved, let them withdraw," said Ling Lan dispassionately, "I have never expected them to make any moves anyway."

Han Jijyun was visibly taken aback by these words, and then his eyes lit up. "Boss, are you saying..."

Ling Lan did not respond, but Han Jijyun too did not expect Ling Lan to answer, because he already had a vague answer in his heart.

Meanwhile, at this moment, in the living quarters of the military academy of a particular year, quite a few people were glaring angrily at the person in the head seat. From among them, a young man with a hard expression yelled angrily in interrogation, "Lin Zhidong<sup>2</sup>, what the hell do you think you're doing? If Regiment Commander Qiao finds out about these things you did, you can just wait for the regiment commander to skin you alive!"



# Chapter 241

## Truth!

"Stay calm!" Facing his companions' inquisition, Lin Zhidong did not become angry, merely asking them levelly to settle down.

"Indeed, we are all from Leiting, all friends. Let's discuss things civilly. Mu Ying, don't be impatient, let's hear Lin Zhidong's explanation." A young man seated beside Lin Zhidong advised the livid Mu Ying with soothing tones while throwing a look at Lin Zhidong at the same time, urging him to start explaining things quickly.

"Honestly, if Regiment Commander Qiao were not in Closed Door Meditation, I would have suggested directly to let Regiment Commander Qiao go forth personally to bring those people under control." Opening his mouth, Lin Zhidong did not explain, instead stating his opinion.

"Why did you have to be so impatient? Couldn't we do this gradually in a more subtle manner? Do you know that these actions of yours will smear the good name of Leiting?" Mu Ying once more leapt to his feet upon hearing Lin Zhidong's words, practically spitting in rage as he almost shoved a finger right onto Lin Zhidong's nose.

Lin Zhidong pushed the other's finger aside with one hand, turned to look at the others present, and said, "Do you all also think the same way?"

The young man who had initially been playing mediator instantly smiled wryly and said, "Zhidong, your actions over these past few days have really gone a little overboard. Before he went into Closed Door Meditation, the regiment commander had said that any action representing Leiting as a whole needed to be discussed and agreed upon by all of us first before execution. You skipped talking to us, directly going ahead to provoke the other side so openly..." He cast a glance at the others then added, "We just feel extremely uninformed!"

The corner of Lin Zhidong's lips carried a hint of a sneer. He looked towards the others — their gazes held unconcealed censure. He sniffed coldly and said, "It's not that I didn't want to tell you all, but I was afraid that if I told you all, this secret would get out. At that time, the loss for Leiting would be considerable."

"You don't trust us?" Mu Ying leapt up once again <sup>1</sup>.

"Yes, I do not trust you all," replied Lin Zhidong unreservedly.

"You..." Lin Zhidong's words made the faces of everyone there change. They felt that these words were a huge insult directed at them.

Seeing the situation turning sour, the mediating young man quickly said, "Zhidong, how can you say things like that? Being friends for so many years... don't you have even this bit of trust in us?"

Hearing this, Lin Zhidong's expression gentled slightly. "It's not that I don't trust you all. I just don't trust the people by your sides. The more people who know, the easier it would be for this secret to get out. And this matter concerns whether we, Leiting, will finally be able to conquer and unite the factions in the military academy in the future."

"What do you mean?" Lin Zhidong's words caused everyone's expressions to shift.

"You all must use your spiritual power to make a vow, that the secret ends here with you all, otherwise I will not tell you." On this matter, Lin Zhidong was surprisingly insistent and forceful. This also made the group exceptionally angry, almost flicking their sleeves to storm away.

The mediating young man once again spoke up to ease the tension, "Zhidong, is this really necessary? Making a vow with spiritual power is no small thing..."

"The secret I'm about to say has great importance for Leiting. I believe that when the regiment commander finds out, he will also approve of the way I've handled things," answered Lin Zhidong calmly.

Mu Ying was the first to jump out. "If I have to make a vow, then I'll make a vow! But, Lin Zhidong, if the secret you tell is less than dogshit, I will definitely report this to the regiment commander and get you kicked out of Leiting."

Lin Zhidong said haughtily, "If you all think this secret is not worth your spiritual power vows, you don't have to report to the regiment commander. I will ask to leave on my own."

"Fine, Lin Zhidong, you must follow through with your words!" That said, Mu Ying was

the first one to make a spiritual power vow. The others, seeing that Mu Ying had already done so, could only follow suit helplessly.

Seeing that everyone present had made a vow, only then did Lin Zhidong bring out a document from beside him. He then passed it to the mediator youth who was sitting closest to him.

The youth opened it, and his expression changed as he read its contents. He forcefully suppressed the urge to ask questions, merely passing the document to the next in line. A similar expression appeared on the next person's face as well, and very quickly, the document had been passed through everyone's hands to finally return to Lin Zhidong. Lin Zhidong threw the document to one side, where an energy converter was already prepared. The converter deconstructed the file, turning it into immaterial energy, and saving it into an energy block.

"Now you've all seen it. This is why I did not notify you all, choosing to provoke the other side directly," said Lin Zhidong coldly.

"How can this be?" Mu Ying's face was a picture of disbelief. "One or two is still believable, but for an entire ship's new cadets to be this way — this is too outlandish."

In the face of Mu Ying's scepticism, Lin Zhidong's face darkened. "Do you all not trust my hacking skills?"

One of the group could not help but say awkwardly, "Zhidong, you're the hacker with the best grades in this school. We all trust in your abilities. It's just that the contents inside are just too outlandish, so we can't help but be a little suspicious."

"Could they have cheated?" Another in the group glanced at Lin Zhidong and then said slowly, "Or perhaps the information Zhidong obtained is false?" At the heart of it, they still did not believe in the appearance of these results.

His companions' distrust made Lin Zhidong's expression turn stormy. He held back the rage in his heart as he sneered, "This information, was obtained by me from the academy's mainframe's most secure S-tier. If even the S-tier needs to contain such a fake document, I really don't know where else real documents should be stored. Should they be stored on the Federation's mainframe's S-tier instead?"

"As for cheating, do you all really believe in that reason yourselves?" asked Lin Zhidong with a mocking tone, "The ones who test cadets are all hardened veteran soldiers who

have been baptised in the flames of fire. Getting them to help you cheat? I don't know what price one could use to move them. Let me put this another way. Even if they cheated, would they make it so obvious? All the students on the entire ship being so outstanding? Not a single one who failed?"

Lin Zhidong's words made the others all cool down instantly. Indeed, a fake document would never be placed in the S-tier of the military academy's mainframe. Since Lin Zhidong had said S-tier, then it definitely could not be wrong. After all, every year, the information Lin Zhidong had mined from the S-tier on the new cadets had always been extremely accurate — it was impossible that he would have obtained false data from a wrong direction this time. Besides, if this was truly a case of cheating, the method was really too idiotic. These abnormal results would certainly attract the attention of the school administration, and prompt inquiries and investigations to prove its validity. No one would dare to be so blatant and daring in doing such an idiotic thing.

"I believe, not much longer after this, the hackers of the other factions should also be getting this data. At that time, there won't be any hope for us to monopolise this group of people." Lin Zhidong swept his gaze around their circle before continuing to say, "You all are clear on Regiment Commander Qiao's standards of recruitment. He only accepts new cadets whose assessment results are pass and above. Especially for those who did well, he would not hesitate to employ measures to obtain them. We cannot allow Regiment Commander Qiao miss out on these excellent talents while he is in Closed Door Meditation."

Lin Zhidong's little speech made everyone's expressions turn grim. They all knew Qiao Ting's methods — if he knew the assessment results of these new cadets, he would definitely use all sorts of means to pull them into his fold.

"However, since they are so exceptional, they probably won't be so easy to subdue?" Everyone loved excellent talents, but these people would often be extremely proud and self-assured, unwilling to easily submit to another.

"That's why I set up this stage. Even if we're a bit arrogant, we need to let the other side accept our challenge and then follow up with a bet. When they lose, they'll have to collectively join us, Leiting." Lin Zhidong had already thought things through.

"What if they are afraid and don't dare to accept our challenge?" After all, Leiting was the number one faction in the school — these new cadets may find their legs trembling from fear at the mere mention of Leiting's name.

"That would be even better. We can just push for them to join us if they don't even dare to fight us. We can then promise to pardon all past transgressions against us. But if they dare to join any other factions, we'll beat them up every single time we see them. In the mecha world, we will block off all avenues of their growth — if we can't use them, then we will crush them completely," said Lin Zhidong with a cold smile. He had already considered both possible reactions from the other side. He would not let them escape his grasp — he would make sure to wrap this up well before the regiment commander emerged from his training.

"If it's a battle with the new cadets, the school rules only allow physical skills combat. And those students are from Doha, which prioritizes physical skills the most. I fear that we won't be able to have much of an advantage."

"No matter how strong they are in combat, they are still just first year cadets, young fledgelings freshly out from the scout academies, while we're already 4th year or 5th year senior cadets. Mecha combat has not only improved our mecha skills, it has also spurred on the development of our physical skills. Those extra years of combat experience is enough for us to push them around," said Lin Zhidong with a cold smirk, "Even those among us with the weakest physical skills would have been able to make up for the lack of talent in three years' time. You think they have a chance?"

"Well that's true." The group nodded all around. They may have put their focus on mecha combat for the past few years, but in their spare time they had still gone to the physical skills combat hall to spar with others for the fun of it. They too had sensed the benefits mecha combat had brought to their physical skills — during their spars, they had been able to instantly discover their opponent's openings. Undoubtedly, their physical skills and vision had improved greatly from when they had first entered the academy.

"Won't the other factions interfere? If they too know about these people, they will not let us monopolize them." Someone else brought up another issue.

"Hackers. Our school only has a few names on record, and they all only belong to the top 4 factions. However, I am the first to obtain this information. In order to delay the others, I've even added some precautions of my own, so they'll need to spend some time to crack it. Though I don't know when they'll be able to break through, I have been watching their progress. Still, this matter should not be dragged out — if it's dragged out too long, and the others obtain the real data as well, we may very likely end up with nothing to show for our efforts <sup>2</sup>..." explained Lin Zhidong, "So, we need to

issue a challenge to the new cadet regiment and settle things. Once we succeed in absorbing them into our fold, even if the other factions discover the truth then, they will not dare to offend us with the regiment commander around."

"That's good. Looks like we need to issue our challenge as soon as possible..." All those seated here finally came to an agreement, and they began discussing when they should issue their letter of challenge to the new cadet regiment.

# Chapter 242

## Letter of Challenge!

In reality, the new cadet regiment received the letter of challenge even earlier than Ling Lan had predicted. Two days after their discussion <sup>1</sup>, the new cadet regiment's public regiment commander, Wu Jiong, received Leiting's letter of challenge!

On that day, around noon, Qi Long, Wu Jiong, and the others from the Mecha Piloting Class-A had just completed their brutal physical training for the morning. Dragging their tired selves to the large military academy canteen to eat, they had barely sat down and taken a few bites when a raucous commotion broke out by the canteen doors, causing the initially noisy canteen to instantly fall silent.

"Which of you is the regiment commander for the new cadet regiment? Show yourself to accept this letter of challenge!"

The one who spoke was a cadet dressed in a blue military-style uniform. He swept a gaze over the people within the canteen, his haughty expression seeming to view them as trash. Behind him were five or six cadets also dressed in the same uniform. Based on the uniform colour alone, it was clear that they were definitely part of the top 500 brilliant students within the military academy.

The basic colour of the military academy uniforms was green, signifying the average student. Blue represented the top 500 outstanding cadets in the school, based on their cumulative grades from all aspects. Meanwhile, the dux <sup>2</sup> of each specialization of each year would be wearing the glorious white uniform exclusive to them. This was a reward for the elite of the elites, as well as a type of respect accorded to them. Take the Thunder King for example. He was the dux of the 4th year mecha piloting specialization, so his uniform was the only white one among those of that year within that specialization.

Initially, there had been a few other people dressed in blue uniforms who had been eating, who had turned with expressions of irritation at being disturbed, but when they saw the badge pinned on the chests of the interrupting group, their expressions shifted, and the rage on their faces faded away. This was because they knew which faction that badge represented — it wasn't something they could afford to go up

against...

Wu Jiong and Qi Long shared a knowing glance. That night, Ling Lan had already assembled them and told Wu Jiong, Li Yingjie, and the other team leaders of her suppositions. Thus, they had constantly been waiting for Leiting's move, and now they had finally come.

"What? Is the new cadet regiment so gutless, not daring to accept our Leiting's letter of challenge?" mocked the youth in the blue uniform. He had already been informed by the upper ranks that he must enrage the leaders of the new cadet regiment, so they would accept the letter of challenge on impulse. Of course, if they refused to accept no matter how he taunted, then he would throw down this ultimatum — the regiment commander of the new cadet regiment would have to go to Leiting's headquarters to apologise personally to the vice regiment commanders, otherwise they would not be spared.

Qi Long threw a glance at Wu Jiong — for this type of antagonistic scenario, his affable face was not at all suitable. In Boss Lan's words, Qi Long had a goofy nice-guy face, much more suited for acting innocent and shifting blame after the new cadet regiment had gone out to bully others.

Wu Jiong understood tacitly what he should do. He used his chopsticks to rap the dishware before him, and then with a harsh throw, his chopsticks smacked loudly onto the metal table, emitting a crisp loud clang. The atmosphere of the initially silent canteen became fraught with tension due to this sharp noise.

With a subtle smirk on his lips, Wu Jiong leaned back in his chair, his arms crossed before him as he said evenly, "I am the regiment commander of the new cadet regiment. Speak if you have something to say, fart if you have to <sup>3</sup>!"

Boss Lan had said before — they absolutely could not lose in terms of attitude!

These past few years, although Wu Jiong had always been suppressed by Ling Lan and Qi Long, he had still been an active participant and leader in the grand armed melee back then, as well as in the fight for the spaceship's administrative rights. These victories made him composed and confident, and because he had always been pressed down by others more exceptional than him, he had not become overconfident and arrogant. Right now, even though he was facing the military academy's number one faction Leiting, his heart was as calm as ever, not at all apprehensive.



This attitude of Wu Jiong's was clearly out of Leiting's expectations. Rage emerged on their faces, and the lead youth in particular took one step forward and yelled, "Punk, you watch your mouth!"

Wu Jiong threw a cool glance over and said calmly, "What? You have something to say?"

The clear contempt in Wu Jiong's gaze made those people step forward instinctively, faces overcome with rage as they seemed intent on teaching Wu Jiong a lesson.

But before they could get any closer, the new cadets who had originally been seated quietly in the canteen suddenly all stood up in a clatter. They glared angrily at the people from Leiting, as if warning them that if they dared step any closer, then the new cadets could not be blamed for not being courteous anymore.

Seeing 300 or more people stand up altogether in one go, the expressions of the five or six people from Leiting paled abruptly. Their steps faltered, and after several changes in complexion, the head youth in blue actually began to laugh, "Haha, that earlier was just a joke! Seeing the new cadet regiment so united, we Leiting feel very heartened by this! You all are worthy to fight against Leiting!"

This person was extremely thick-skinned — even as he flattered the new cadet regiment, he did not forget to elevate his own faction. He smiled gently at Wu Jiong and asked, "This regiment commander, how may I address you?"

Wu Jiong uncrossed his arms to tap his fingers lightly against the surface of the table. He stared at the head youth with a half-smile — this familiar expression made Qi Long and those in his team feel an ache in their teeth. *Please, no matter how much you idolise our boss, you really don't have to learn his mannerisms, right?* They felt cold just looking at him.

Perhaps this expression of Wu Jiong's put a lot of pressure on the head youth, for his smile actually slipped off his face. In the end, he could only stand there awkwardly, unsure how to wrap things up.

As expected, this expression of Boss Lan's could really do a lot of damage... he would have to use it more in the future; it was enough to subdue some minor characters. Wu Jiong tucked away this expression, satisfied, and opened his mouth to say, "My surname is Wu. You may call me Regiment Commander Wu!"

"Regiment Commander Wu, impressive as expected. With you to lead them, the new

cadet regiment will certainly do well." The head youth immediately threw up a thumbs up in response, expressing his heartfelt admiration. Since mockery and pressure would not work, he could only try cajoling. As long as the other side accepted their challenge, he would find a way to avenge this humiliation.

No matter how the head tried to hide it, the indignation in his eyes had still been detected by Qi Long and the others. However, since they were already determined to clash with Leiting anyway, they really did not care whether the other was offended or not.

"May Regiment Commander Wu please accept this letter of challenge from Leiting? With such an exceptional opponent as yourselves, we of Leiting are also overjoyed!" Under the glares of over 300 people, the blue-clothed head youth nervously walked over to Wu Jiong, withdrew a rectangular card from his pocket, and handed it over with both hands.

Right then, a hand intercepted to take the card. It was Ye Xu, who was seated beside Wu Jiong. At this moment, he had already stood up, snatching the card over with one hand to then pass it to Wu Jiong.

Only then did Wu Jiong accept the card and open it. Inside, it was written that three days later, the two sides would engage in a physical skills showdown at the combat hall. Both sides would send 5 representatives, with winning 3 out of 5 being the winning condition. On top of that, there would be an additional wager involved, to be disclosed on the day of the showdown, and it cannot be refused <sup>4</sup>.

Sure enough, Leiting's objective was their new cadet regiment as a whole — Boss Lan's predictions were not wrong. Seeing this, Wu Jiong knew for certain what was going on. That wager was definitely for the new cadet regiment to join Leiting...

"Alright, three days later, at the combat hall. Be there or be square!" Wu Jiong snapped the card shut again, and replied with firm conviction. This had already been pre-discussed, so Wu Jiong naturally dared to accept right away.

"Good! Regiment Commander Wu is refreshingly straightforward as expected. Three days later, we'll await your grand presence at the combat hall!" His mission complete, the head youth of the Leiting group was all smiles.

At this time, from another table, Li Yingjie threw a cold glare their way and said

imperiously, "Since you're done with your bullsh\*t, you can scram!"

The people from Leiting had been frozen in place by the sheer force of presence of Wu Jiong and those 300 or so people, and now they were being openly derided by some punk from who knows where. They were abnormally frustrated — they had no way to oppose the new cadet regiment's Regiment Commander Wu, but teaching this pompous brat should be fine, right? And so, several people began moving towards Li Yingjie with sinister intent.

Li Yingjie flicked his fingers and kicked away the chair behind him, saying with a cold smile, "What? Want to fight?"

With this one sound, a flurry of the screeching noises of chairs being shifted rose throughout the canteen. The 300 or so people who had been standing in place, glaring angrily at them, had actually pushed away their chairs and begun moving closer, several of them already rubbing their palms together in anticipation of a fight.

With that, they could not be unaware that this cocky punk before them was definitely someone from the upper ranks of the new cadet regiment. The blue-clothed head youth could no longer hold back the rage in his heart. He pointed an angry finger at Li Yingjie and said savagely, "Fine! Three days later, just you wait!"

That said, he led his posse to scurry away, sent off by a wave of raucous 'scram!'s from behind, compounding their shame. Ever since joining Leiting, they had always been above others, playing the role of the bullies; but today, they were treated to a taste of being bullied mercilessly by others, and it was almost enough to make them shatter and swallow their teeth <sup>5</sup>.

Seeing the people from Leiting scurry away, only then did Wu Jiong pass the letter of challenge to Qi Long across from him. Qi Long flipped it open to read, and instantly began to chuckle coldly, "As Boss expected. Leiting has really taken us, the new cadet regiment, for a fish fillet on the chopping block, ready for them to cut as they will."

At this moment, Wu Jiong was already anxiously looking for his chopsticks. Earlier, to create the right atmosphere, he had coolly thrown his chopsticks onto the desk, and now he had no idea where they had flown to... his poor stomach was so hungry it was about to revolt. If he still did not eat, he would become the first regiment commander to faint from hunger. For the sake of aiding the new cadet regiment's stand, he did not have it easy...

"I can't take it anymore. Lend me your chopsticks!" Seeing Qi Long's chopsticks set on the table, Wu Jiong could bear it no longer, taking it into his hands to begin eating rapaciously... Boo hoo hoo, the morning's physical training had already squeezed him dry of his vital energy — if he did not replenish it, he would really starve to death.

"No! Those are mine!" Exasperated, Qi Long threw aside the letter of challenge in his hands, wanting to snatch his chopsticks back, but Wu Jiong was a step quicker. He dashed over to the next dining table, not forgetting to say as he went, "I supported you in acting out this scene. You should repay me somehow — lending me your chopsticks can be considered repayment."

Qi Long directed a rude gesture at Wu Jiong, but did not continue to give chase. Wu Jiong was not wrong; he should have been the one to step up and accept that letter of challenge... but he was very hungry too! Although he had eaten a bit more than Wu Jiong earlier, his appetite was naturally voracious — how could those few bites earlier be enough to satisfy his stomach which was equally bawling from hunger?

His gaze turned, and he saw Han Jijyun eating seriously beside him, bite by measured bite, slow and methodical, not at all impatient or hurried. It was as if he were not at all hungry, and was only eating to complete the mission of eating...

"Oh Jijyun, since you aren't that hungry, then first take care of your big bro here!" Qi Long cheerfully snatched away the chopsticks from Han Jijyun's unresisting hand and then began happily eating again.

Han Jijyun stared blankly at his now empty right hand, and then turned to look at the joyfully eating Qi Long. He almost wanted to dump the dishes before his eyes onto Qi Long's head — was there a sworn brother who would do such a thing? Not causing trouble for others, but troubling one of his own instead?

At another table, Lin Zhong-qing saw this scene and let out a soft sigh. He took out a small pouch from his waist, drawing out a few short metal sticks from inside it. Screwing them together, it took but a few moments for him to produce a pair of regular-sized chopsticks, which he then passed silently to Han Jijyun.

Receiving the chopsticks, Han Jijyun tamped down on his anger and resumed eating. In his mind, he decided that he would definitely not help Qi Long next time. No matter how much Boss Lan bullied Qi Long, he would turn his head and pretend he saw nothing <sup>6</sup>.

The news of the new cadet regiment's haughty acceptance of Leiting's letter of challenge soon spread throughout the entire military academy. Those various large factions which had always been suppressed by Leiting were naturally gleeful at their misfortune — it was unexpected that the forceful Leiting would also have times where they had their faces smacked so hard. However, they did not believe that the new cadet regiment could withstand Leiting's subsequent vengeance. They were all waiting for the new cadet regiment to disperse under the pressure, and were prepared to slip in in the aftermath to take advantage of the panic and chaos to bring those lost new cadets into their own factions.

Just as everyone was waiting to see the downfall of the new cadet regiment, only Li Lanfeng greeted the news with deep contemplation, his expression serious and considering.

# Chapter 243

## The Distance between the Two?

Li Lanfeng's attitude was only clear to one person by his side, Zhao Jun. Zhao Jun was a little bemused by it, asking, "Why? Do you have some other insight?"

Li Lanfeng lifted his head to glance at Zhao Jun, and said contemplatively, "The new cadet regiment accepted the letter of challenge in such a high-handed fashion... it's clear to see that they have full confidence in themselves."

Zhao Jun did not think much of it. "The students from the Doha Central Scout Academy have always thought highly of themselves, somewhat blind to reality. Wasn't Zhang Jing-an exactly like this back then? Clashing with the Thunder King right from the start, and now he doesn't even dare to make a peep, tucking his tail between his legs whenever he sees the Thunder King..."

Zhao Jun rubbed his jaw. "Right now, I really want to see the faces of those new cadets after they've been thoroughly thrashed by Leiting. Their expressions must be very interesting."

Li Lanfeng breathed out slowly and silently, then asked softly, "That aberrant who Zhang Jing-an is still so conscious of after three years — could he only be at the level of someone like Zhang Jing-an?"

At these words, Zhao Jun's expression shifted. He too recalled the secret news he had uncovered from Zhang Jing-an's faction. That aberrant was someone who Zhang Jing-an hated so much his teeth gnashed, but even so, Zhang Jing-an still had not dared to make a move, forcefully holding back his anger to watch the new cadet regiment establish itself with cold eyes...

"Who exactly is that aberrant? I heard that the one who presented himself to accept the letter of challenge was a youth called Wu Jiong. He claimed to be Regiment Commander Wu of the new cadet regiment... could it be him?" Zhao Jun was not very good at analysing data.

"Regiment Commander Wu? Have you ever heard of a true regiment commander

being addressed with a surname attached? Only the second or third in command, those vice regiment commanders and such, would have their surnames attached to the title, for convenience of distinction!" said Li Lanfeng calmly.

A cold light flashed through Zhao Jun's eyes. "In other words, the true regiment commander of the new cadet regiment has not yet shown himself."

"Showing one's trump card right from the start, now *that* would be stupid," replied Li Lanfeng, "So, I have my reservations on the outcome of Leiting's operation this time."

Right then, Li Lanfeng's mind was filled with the information on this batch of new cadets he had gleaned from the S-tier of the military academy mainframe... those were not a bunch of ordinary new cadets! If the people from Leiting underestimated them, without the Thunder King to hold down the fort, Leiting might really end up capsizing their boat in a ditch.

Of course, it would be his pleasure to see the Thunder King suffer a loss!



At this moment, Ling Lan, who was in the mecha world desperately raising her level, did not know that Leiting's letter of challenge had already been delivered into Wu Jiong's hands. However, Ling Lan had already asked the team leaders to inform their respective team members about their upcoming clash with Leiting two days ago.

Telling them served two purposes — one, was to let the regiment members know the decision of the new cadet regiment; two, to distinguish those members within their organisation who would veer with the wind <sup>1</sup>, only thinking to use the new cadet regiment to establish themselves. Ling Lan believed that a faction's strength laid not in numbers, but in unity — only if they were willing to share their trials and rewards equally would they be able to go far. She felt that the pressure from Leiting this time would be a great opportunity to assess the will and motivation of the members of the new cadet regiment.

As for Ling Lan's team, Qi Long and the gang would naturally follow their boss loyally. Meanwhile, Wu Jiong was extremely taken in by Ling Lan, for Ling Lan's many daring decisions had benefitted him greatly. Moreover, ten years of being schoolmates had shown Wu Jiong that Ling Lan was an extremely trustworthy person — he would never abandon any comrades that follow him. Thus, Wu Jiong was willing to fight

alongside Ling Lan for a better future. He wasn't afraid — even if they lost terribly in the end, it would be a waste of their youth if they did not take wild risks!

As for Li Yingjie, even though he had always had a bit of a grudge towards Ling Lan and Qi Long, Ling Lan's strength truly left Li Yingjie speechless. Additionally, Ling Lan did not do anything to restrain Li Yingjie's temperament or personality, even outright stating that the arrogant tasks would be his responsibility. This made Li Yingjie feel deep down as if he had finally found someone who understood him. Under these circumstances, when Ling Lan asked him whether he wanted to leave the regiment, Li Yingjie had instantly refused.

Li Yingjie did not consider anything else. He only thought that since Ling Lan believed in him and trusted him, then he must live up to this trust <sup>2</sup>. Besides, when has the cocky Li Yingjie ever been afraid of someone? The number one faction in the military academy? So what? He, Li Yingjie, would not submit. This was his pride as a member of the first elite family of the Federation.

As for the other students from the Central Scout Academy, Ling Lan's decisions had never disappointed them before, so even though they were somewhat unsure about things this time, they were still determined to push forward or retreat alongside Boss Lan. This was because they knew that if they did not resist, they would still be seen as potential slaves by the other factions. In that case, they might as well fight it out in a gamble — after all, in their eyes, Boss Lan was extremely strong and had never failed their expectations.

Rather, it was the decision of the students from the other scout academies of Doha which surprised Ling Lan and the others. They had initially thought that a majority of these people would withdraw from the new cadet regiment, wisely choosing to protect themselves, but surprisingly, most did not want to quit, willing to advance and retreat together with the new cadet regiment. Only an extremely small number chose to quit, not even 30 people in total. Therefore, the total number of people in the new cadet regiment was still endlessly close to 500, not reduced by much. This made many factions which had wanted to see the new cadet regiment fall apart greatly disappointed... especially Zhang Jing-an, who had wanted to take advantage of the situation to recruit people.

Of course, it had to be said that these students' decision not to withdraw, their willingness to fight with Ling Lan, had a lot to do with one man's efforts. He was the one who had joined Ling Lan's party midway during the spaceship's operation, Third



Elder Brother Gao Jinyun.

During this period of time, Gao Jinyun had built up quite a reputation among the students not from the Central Scout Academy. After all, he had been the only team leader who had participated in the plan to conquer the ship who was not from the Central Academy. Under his publicity efforts, Ling Lan's image rose to lofty heights in the new cadets' minds. Even though Leiting was the number one faction in the school, in these new cadets' eyes, that Boss Lan, who was strong enough to 'defeat' the captain, was no weaker than Leiting's regiment commander, the Thunder King. And this was the main reason why they were willing to support Ling Lan in this clash.

Their way of thinking was undeniably extremely naive, exactly like that of a newbie... but newborn calves are not afraid of tigers <sup>3</sup>, and sometimes, what looked like a reckless action would turn out to be a momentous turn capable of changing one's fate.



That night, Wu Jiong and the others brought the letter of challenge right away to Ling Lan's villa to pass it to her.

Ling Lan sat on the sofa in the hall and calmly opened the letter. When she saw the contents of the challenge, the corner of her lips quirked up involuntarily. "Sure enough, their challenge is one of physical skills! This is our chance."

Wu Jiong's expression did not ease by much. "They will definitely send the combat experts of the higher grades, perhaps even seniors of the 6th year. They are older than us by five years. Five years' time is enough to pull apart from us by a whole realm." Wu Jiong was currently only at Refinement stage — if the opponent sent only those from Qi-Jin stage, they would lose for certain if they only relied on Qi Long and Ling Lan.

"Not necessarily!" replied Ling Lan decisively.

"How so?" asked Wu Jiong uncomprehendingly.

"Jiyyun, can you find the course curriculum for all six years of our mecha piloting specialization?" Ling Lan abruptly turned her head to ask Han Jiyyun.

Although Han Jiyyun was not sure why Ling Lan would ask about this, he still nodded and began looking up the course info of the military academy on his communicator. In

the end, he connected his communicator to the largest virtual projection system of the villa walls, to display the contents of his search.

"Wu Jiong, take a look, what do we have to learn in our six years here?" said Ling Lan, pointing at the info displayed on the screen.

Wu Jiong cast a baffled look at Ling Lan, but still strode forwards without any objections. He scanned the screen quickly and was struck with realisation. "So that's how it is. In our six years, there really aren't many physical skills courses!"

"That's right. In our six years here, the military academy focuses on cultivating our mecha piloting skills, and not our physical combat skills. Thus, the upper years would not have put much attention and effort on physical combat skills, so the gap between us and the seniors should not be as wide as you might imagine..." Ling Lan stated her thoughts. "This is also why I believe we have a chance. In terms of physical combat, I believe the students of our Central Academy are definitely the best," said Ling Lan with steely conviction.

"Yep, Boss, you're right," Qi Long was the first to respond enthusiastically. Although the others did not say anything, the initial worry and grimness in their eyes had faded, and their gazes began to shine.

Qi Long and the others had regained their confidence so swiftly because Ling Lan's words were not pure consolation, but rooted in truth. Compared to the other scout academies, the Central Scout Academy was undoubtedly one which placed the most emphasis on physical combat skills. It could be said that among the exceptional combat experts within the military academy right now, a large portion were from the Central Scout Academy... only a handful were from the scout academies from other planets.

Of course, good physical combat skills did not equate to good mecha piloting skills. As mentioned previously, the talent for mecha piloting was different from the talent needed for physical combat, which was why those with good combat talent may not necessarily become excellent mecha operators. This was also why Zhang Jing-an and his group had been finding it harder and harder to thrive within the military academy.

Mind you, from the second year of admission to the academy onwards, after the cadets officially become mecha operators, the competition between students was no longer centred on physical combat, but on mecha operated combat.

"But, even if we survive this time, what if other organisations come after us?" Although Wu Jiong now had confidence, he was still worried about the future of the new cadet regiment. If those other factions came after them one after another, even if they were made of iron, they would eventually be beaten down.

"Don't worry. After we win this time, the other factions will not come after us," said Ling Lan evenly.

"Why?" asked Wu Jiong.

"If even the first faction Leiting cannot take us down on physical skills, can they do it?" replied Ling Lan, "I reckon that even if they challenge us again, it will definitely be after we officially become mecha operators. That time will truly be our most difficult time. Not only will we have to fend off Leiting's revenge, the other factions will also be waiting to strike."

The Thunder King would not allow the new cadet regiment that had sullied the reputation of Leiting to continue existing. For some reason, Ling Lan actually recalled those words of [No Mecha Unrepaired] — the Thunder King was not someone who could be easily reasoned with...

Although Ling Lan's tone was dark and heavy, her face displayed no sign of pressure, calm as ever as she said, "However, at that time, we will no longer be freshmen. Two years' time is enough for us to gather our strength."

Only then did Ling Lan look towards Wu Jiong and say, "Of course, this period of time won't be easy for us. We'll need to raise our mecha piloting skills as quickly as possible. Otherwise, two years later, lacking strength, we will still become fish meat on a chopping board, free for anyone to slice and dice."

# Chapter 244

## My Goal!

Wu Jiong's expression turned cold and his gaze became solemn. "It looks like we'll need to work hard! I hope that after two years, our new cadet regiment will be able to become one of the top four factions in the academy. At that time, even if the Thunder King wants to consume us, he will have to stop and think about it."

"One of?" Ling Lan threw an icy glance over and said with a huff, "You only have that little bit of ambition?"

Wu Jiong was dumbfounded. "Boss Lan..."

"My goal, is not being one of the factions." Ling Lan's words made Wu Jiong somewhat confused, unsure what in the world Ling Lan was trying to say. However, Ling Lan's following words almost made him fall over in shock. Ling Lan raised a finger to point straight up as he <sup>1</sup> said coldly, "My goal, is to unite the factions of the military academy. In other words, by the time I leave the military academy, there will only be one faction in the school, and that will be ours!"

Ling Lan's face was cold as ever, his expression extremely serious — it was clear to see that everything he had said was from his true heart. Despite his stature and build not being as imposing as Wu Jiong's, his force of presence was absolute in its domination of the scene, suppressing everyone present. This made Wu Jiong lament once more the distance between him and Ling Lan. Ling Lan could become the boss, not only because he had enough strength and capability, but also because he dared to think the unthinkable.

"Alright, Boss Lan, just based on these words of yours alone, I, Li Yingjie, acknowledge you full-heartedly as my boss!" A voice carried over from the doorway. Wu Jiong did not have to turn his head to know who it was <sup>2</sup> — Li Yingjie. This stubborn, prickly, and insubordinate fellow had finally admitted his deference towards Ling Lan.

Li Yingjie's admission similarly surprised Ling Lan. With a quirk of her brow, she teased, "I thought that I was already your boss since a long while back."

Li Yingjie choked, the colour of his face fluctuating unpredictably, and he finally deflated and said, "Forget it. Since I've already acknowledged you as Boss, you can just say whatever you want." Li Yingjie could not refuse to submit — he could not beat Ling Lan in a fight, and he did not have as much guts as the other either. And now, he had even lost to Ling Lan in terms of sheer arrogance. What right did he have still to refute Ling Lan's words?

Li Yingjie's defeated manner made Ling Lan feel rather sorry for him. In the end, she still liked the cocky Li Yingjie better, so Ling Lan pointed at the sofa beside her and said, "Sit, Li Yingjie. I do not wish for you to lose your personality. As long as you are capable enough, I don't think there is anything wrong with being arrogant. In future, if there's anything you can't handle, just look for the others, and if they can't handle it either, come find me..."

Following Ling Lan's words, Li Yingjie's expression lifted up proudly once more, his eyes shining with vibrant light. Behind him, an invisible tail rose higher and higher. Wu Jiong, Qi Long, and the others turned away speechlessly, unable to watch. *Oh, this innocent child...* Once again being coaxed by Boss Lan onto the path of being a great rogue; he had obviously had the opportunity to change his ways and return to the proper path...

Ling Lan looked at Li Yingjie's expression and felt rather guilty. Bewitching an innocent babe like this to do bad things — would she be struck down by lightning...?



Time passed swiftly, and very soon it was time for the waged fight between Leiting and the new cadet regiment. The exclusive combat hall of the military academy had long been filled with students from the various years. Of course, a large majority of the students were there to see Leiting torment the new cadets. Only very, very few new cadets still carried a tendril of hope that the new cadet regiment which was also made up of freshmen would be able to create a miracle, and do them freshmen proud.

Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun both arrived a bit late, but they did not have to squeeze and shoulder their way to a good position at the front of the arena stage. As high-ranking members of one of the four top factions in the military academy, one of the VIP boxes in the combat hall was reserved exclusively for them.

They took an elevator up, and then walked to stand before one of the rooms to the

side. On the door was a square screen of roughly 30 centimetres. Li Lanfeng raised his right hand and waved it at the screen, and then the room door slid lightly to the left, revealing an entrance of about 2 metres wide. The two of them did not hesitate, entering right away.

The moment they entered, a voice could be heard to say, "Haha, speak of the devil <sup>3</sup>! Lanfeng, come, let me introduce you to a talented young fellow."

Li Lanfeng looked in the direction of the voice and saw Han Yu sitting on a sofa waving at him in a rather irreverent manner. Meanwhile, a fresh-faced lanky youth of about 1.8 metres tall was standing tall beside him. He was presumably a new cadet from this year's batch, and the youth was currently observing him smilingly, a trace of respect in his gaze.

Li Lanfeng's lips curved up slightly, revealing a slight smile, making his entire being seem endlessly warm. This smile startled the other however, a thread of confusion flashing through his eyes, but the other quickly got a hold of himself to regain his original expression.

The smile on Li Lanfeng's lips grew deeper. He turned to look at Han Yu, who had been observing his expression intently, and as if not at all aware of Han Yu's previous impolite attitude, he smiled easily and said, "Han Yu, how nice! Congratulations on gaining yet another great fighter. However, no matter how glad you are, you still need to test him well. Don't let some pretender slip in and profit from the confusion again."

Li Lanfeng's words made Han Yu's complexion shift slightly. They made him recall when he had happily taken in a bunch of freshmen who had come from his planet a few days ago. Back then, he had brought those new recruits over here to show off to Li Lanfeng because not a single person from Li Lanfeng's third-rate planet Azure had managed to get into the First Men's Military Academy this time.

Unexpectedly, those recruits had all been useless fellows — the moment they were pressured by Zhao Jun's aura, they had all actually cowered with their tails tucked between their legs, not daring to say another word. Those timid and cowardly expressions still made him furious when he recalled them now. The reactions of those people had truly disgraced their planet Wuji.

All this was because Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng were both from third-rate planets. The two were from different planets though — Zhao Jun was from planet Redrock <sup>4</sup>, while

Li Lanfeng came from planet Azure. Meanwhile, planet Wuji was a first-rate planet within the Federation, much better in terms of both level, treatment, and resources than the third-rate planets. Therefore, losing face in front of Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng was extremely infuriating for Han Yu.

Han Yu took a good look at Li Lanfeng, trying to see if the other was intentionally making a crack at him. However, Li Lanfeng's eyes were unbelievably clear and limpid, and his warm smile and gentle aura had not a single shred of malicious intent in it... could it be that he was overthinking things?

Han Yu could not see anything strange about Li Lanfeng's demeanour, so he sniffed coolly and said, "Hmph, would I make the same mistake again?" He pointed at the youth beside him and continued, "Lanfeng, this is my junior, his name is Zhou Ya <sup>5</sup>. His specialization is military strategy, and he is the first rank in the military strategy specialization among this year's freshmen." When he said this, Han Yu's expression was proud, not forgetting to glance at Li Lanfeng to gauge his expression to see if there was any change. Sadly, his efforts were all in vain — Li Lanfeng's expression was no different from usual, as calm as ever.

Han Yu deflated slightly, turning his head to introduce to the youth, "This is the strategist of our Wuji Mecha Clan, Li Lanfeng. In future, you should learn well from big brother Li. Wuji's future will eventually depend on you and your strategies."

"Big Brother Li, hello, please watch out for me in future." Zhou Ya gave Li Lanfeng a military academy cadet bow, his gaze curious as his eyes roved over this gentlemanly youth before him.

Before Li Lanfeng arrived, Regiment Commander Han Yu had hinted that he hoped Zhou Ya would be able to replace Li Lanfeng and take his position quicker, to become the primary strategist of the Wuji Mecha Clan. Hearing that, he was naturally extremely moved — Regiment Commander Han Yu's words proved the other's trust and acknowledgement of him. Still, he would not become proud and self-conceited because of this and offend Li Lanfeng recklessly.

Frankly, in his conversation with Regiment Commander Han Yu, Zhou Ya had vaguely made out the regiment commander's wariness towards Li Lanfeng. This proved that the other was absolutely not someone to be crossed easily. Otherwise, he would not have been able to retain such a secure hold on the primary strategist position within the mecha clan as someone not from planet Wuji.

Li Lanfeng politely returned a bow of his own, and said with a smile, "Zhou Ya, right? Don't be so formal. I'm not specializing in strategy. It's just that Regiment Commander Han Yu was lacking such an important role, so he made do with me filling in. Now you're here, I can take the burden off my shoulders. It's like Regiment Commander Han Yu said, the future of the Wuji Mecha Clan will depend on you all."

Done speaking, Li Lanfeng did not forget to pat Zhou Ya's shoulder in encouragement. Then, seeking out a random sofa, he sat down. True to his words, his expression was clearly much more relaxed, as if he had genuinely spoken from the heart.

This made Han Yu and Wei Ji, both of who had been closely observing Li Lanfeng, to furrow their brows. This was why they had always been wary of Li Lanfeng — Li Lanfeng's expression was always very composed, gentle, and unassuming. It could perhaps even be described as somewhat easygoing and content with one's lot... but would there really be a cadet, outstanding on all fronts, who had no ambition whatsoever? Both their gazes involuntarily met once more, reading the same suspicion in the other's eyes.

Wei Ji turned his gaze away and suppressed the misgivings in his heart. Standing up, he greeted with a smile, "Zhao Jun, what are you standing at the door for? Still not coming over to sit? I too happen to have a talent from Wuji for you to meet." He pointed at the seat next to his, indicating for Zhao Jun to come over.

Zhao Jun had initially been coldly watching the attacks, both open and covert, being exchanged among the people in the room. Now, seeing Wei Ji calling him, a trace of interest instantly appeared on his austere face. He walked forwards, eyes trained on the youth with a somewhat lazy expression standing by Wei Ji's side, and asked seriously, "A prodigy at mecha piloting?"

Wei Ji choked at those words, and said sulkily, "Zhao Jun, you know that these students have just started working with mecha. No matter how talented, it would be impossible to tell in such a short amount of time!"

Zhao Jun threw a disgruntled glare at Wei Ji. "You know very well that I am only interested in mecha piloting. Why would you mislead me?"

Wei Ji prodded at Zhao Jun helplessly for a moment, finally saying with a bitter chuckle, "Fine, fine, fine, just say it's my fault. But this Wang Hui is a combat genius from our planet Wuji, already at the optimal peak of Refinement stage, just a half step



away from entering Qi-Jin stage." Wei Ji's tone was threaded with a faint trace of pride.

Mind you, these past few years, Zhang Jing-an was the only one who had already advanced into the early stage of Qi-Jin before entering the military academy. The others, no matter how strong, had only been at Refinement. Even the number one of the military academy, the Thunder King Qiao Ting, had only been at the peak of Refinement when he had first entered the academy, a level weaker than Wang Hui.

Of course, when the Thunder King had been a freshman, he had already displayed his terrifying talent in mecha piloting, which was how he had begun suppressing Zhang Jing-an ever since the second year. By now, he had completely left Zhang Jing-an several horse heads behind <sup>6</sup>, shooting straight up to become the number one of the military academy.

# Chapter 245

## The Dux Li Shiyu!

Without question, the Thunder King was a marvel — and Wei Ji hoped that Wang Hui could reproduce this miraculous achievement of the Thunder King. That way, a few years later, when the Thunder King graduated and left the military academy, it would be the time for their Wuji Mecha Clan to rise to the top.

Learning of Wang Hui's combat level, Zhao Jun's eyes flashed brightly. "Not bad, with the addition of these two talents, Wuji's future is boundless!"

Zhao Jun's words made Han Yu and Wei Ji laugh, pleased. In contrast to the shrewd and unfathomable Li Lanfeng, Zhao Jun, who only knew to fight, was much simpler — his words would never twist and turn; what was said was what he meant.

Having said that, Zhao Jun clapped Wang Hui on the shoulder approvingly, then walked over to sit down beside Li Lanfeng.

This move of Zhao Jun's made Han Yu and Wei Ji frown, a trace of frustrated regret in their eyes. Back then, they should not have tried some petty tricks in order to keep Zhao Jun in check through fear, thus enraging him, giving Li Lanfeng the chance to become the mediator between the two sides. From there, Li Lanfeng had gained Zhao Jun's friendship, resulting in their current close relationship. If Zhou Ya really succeeded in replacing Li Lanfeng, they might still be unable to chase away Li Lanfeng too obviously, to force him to resign from his post within the clan...

Over these past few years of cooperation, they had come to learn that Zhao Jun was a very loyal and steadfast person, definitely someone who would sacrifice his life for a friend. If Zhao Jun became discontented with them over Li Lanfeng, he might choose to leave the Wuji Mecha Clan in a fit of rage to follow Li Lanfeng, and that would be a major loss for them.

Zhao Jun was a genius at mecha piloting, strong enough to squeeze into the top three of their year. Excluding Li Lanfeng's strategic planning, Zhao Jun was integral to the Wuji Mecha Clan's secure third-place ranking. If the two of them went off to join another faction because of this, it would very likely affect the position of their Wuji

Mecha Clan among the school factions...

Han Yu's and Wei Ji's eyes met, sharing a glance, conveying their tacit decision to temporarily set their plan aside and continue tolerating Li Lanfeng a while longer. Zhou Ya and Wang Hui still needed some time to grow anyway; their mecha clan indeed still needed Li Lanfeng's strategic mind.

Of course, they decided mentally that they would find a chance to drive a wedge between Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun in the interim — once the two became at odds, it would be time for them to banish Li Lanfeng.

So decided, the two began conversing enthusiastically with Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun. Not long after, a dark wall within the box suddenly lit up — it turned out that this was a high-tech screen, and it was currently set up for direct viewing without any segmentations. Of course, it was also possible to choose to dissect the screen into several windows for multiple viewing angles. Right then, on the arena stage dominating the screen, several youths in blue uniforms suddenly appeared. Their expressions were composed and proud; it was the delegation from the Leiting Mecha Clan. With that, the four of them in the box stopped their conversation, turning their eyes to the large screen.

In the dark box, facing the screen, no one saw Li Lanfeng's smile turn mocking from its initial warmth, and his clear gaze became deep and dark. The current Li Lanfeng was no longer at all kind and approachable, instead emitting a cold edge.



The moment the Leiting people got on the stage, they received the passionate cheers of all the students in the audience of the combat hall. The Federation had always championed the rule of survival of the fittest, and this was displayed most vividly within the military academy. The Leiting Mecha Clan was the strongest faction in the military academy, and so obtained the acknowledgement and respect of the majority of the cadets.

At this moment, the other boxes on the second floor were gradually being claimed by their respective owners. Practically all the people in the boxes took the cheers coming from the combat hall below as a matter of fact, absolutely certain that the final victors would be Leiting. Only in one particular corner of one of the boxes was there someone worrying about the fate of the New Cadet Regiment <sup>1</sup>.

"F\*ck, the whole hall is cheering for Leiting. No one thinks the New Cadet Regiment will win. Honestly speaking, I don't think the New Cadet Regiment has any hope of winning either. I say, has your younger cousin brother's head been shot at before? Actually daring to accept Leiting's letter of challenge?" In that box, a baby-faced youth in a blue uniform abruptly smacked his hands onto the arms of his sofa, his entire expression a mask of rage at the perceived incompetence.

Standing before the screen, a person in a white uniform was standing tall with his back to the baby-faced youth. He cut a dashing figure, and with a hand on the frame of the screen, he replied without even turning back, "It's fine since he has already accepted. At least I'll be able to see how much this younger cousin brother of mine who has always been aiming for the first inheritance rights has grown."

"Just for that reason? That's why you actually emerged from your laboratory to come see this competition that he is destined to lose?" The baby-faced youth's face was filled with incredulity.

He knew his sworn brother — ever since they had entered the First Men's Military Academy, and he had chosen to specialize in military medical research, it was like he had been possessed by a demon. Day and night, he was always at the laboratory with his instructors researching the various strange and bizarre diagnostic and treatment questions known to the Federation at present. Perhaps he truly had talent in this respect, for he actually managed to successfully produce several treatment procedures in the course of his research, which after practical real-world testing, were discovered to be extremely effective. As a result of his exceptional performance on these course problems, from the start of the second year, he had successfully become the dux of the military medical research specialization. Since then, the position of dux had seemed reserved for him alone, never to budge.

The baby-faced youth had always believed that if the Thunder King was a peerless prodigy in mecha piloting, then his good friend, Li Shiyu, was certainly a horrifyingly aberrant existence in the medical field. The two dominated over the masses in their respective domains, becoming the indisputable number ones of their fields.

"Lose?" Li Shiyu muttered to himself. At this moment, five more figures appeared on the arena stage, dressed in the average cadet's green uniform. It was the five representatives of the New Cadet Regiment here to participate in the physical skills combat showdown.

Through the screen, Li Shiyu stared at the cocky punk who was standing with his arms crossed on the stage. His initially handsome face instantly became dark and foreboding, as he bit out word by word, "If that punk loses, I will make him pay the price." The latent energy spurring gene agent S-modification that he had just developed recently — didn't it just happen to be lacking some human experimental candidates? Perhaps Li Yingjie would be a suitable experiment subject.

At this moment, Li Yingjie, who had his chin lifted up defiantly, suddenly felt a chill pass through his body. He could not help but shiver, causing Luo Lang beside him to glance at him disapprovingly, "You're afraid now?"

Li Yingjie glared at Luo Lang, and shot back, "Who's afraid? There was just a gust of cold wind earlier..."

Cold wind? Luo Lang looked around at this fully enclosed combat hall with not a single gap for air flow — the temperature forever maintained at 20 degrees by the thermostat. In this place where not a trace of wind could be created... a cold wind? Who was he trying to fool?

Luo Lang sniffed and rolled his eyes, no longer paying any mind to the cowardly Li Yingjie beside him. He had originally thought that the always cocky Li Yingjie did not know what fear was, but the other was unexpectedly just a tiger in a cave — only cocksure and domineering in its own den.

Luo Lang's sniff clearly revealed his true opinion, which caused Li Yingjie's complexion to flush and pale erratically. He wished dearly that he could grab hold of the other's collar and yell in his face: *What the hell are you sniffing for?! Everything this bro has said is the truth! There really had been a blast of cold wind, or else why would this bro shiver?*

Unfortunately, reality did not permit Li Yingjie to do so. He could only suppress the urge to right this misunderstanding and put aside his shame for now. In his heart, he decided that he must obtain victory in the fighting ring — he would use reality to tell Luo Lang that he, Li Yingjie, had never been afraid of the opponent before.

These things that happened on the stage could not be observed clearly by the spectating students. All they could see was a pretty youth and a prideful youth bending their heads close to exchange a few words, and then move apart again to stand still, patiently waiting for the referee the school administration had assigned to appear.

The military academy permitted wagering on fights, whether official or personal. The only difference was that, official fight wagers would be officiated over by the academy's referee, while personal fight wagers would not involve the academy in any way.

Still, both types of wagering had one restriction — no deaths could be incurred. If an incident of death occurred, the academy would dispatch a team to investigate. And if the offending side was discovered to have killed with intent, the student or organisation which had intentionally caused the death would be mercilessly court-martialled and tried under the full force of the law. The most severe punishment possible naturally being the death penalty.

Thus, even if there was discord or conflict among the cadets which was carried over into their wagers, the wagers would typically not result in any deaths. Of course, cases where the perpetrator intended to die along with their victim were not included in this.

The fight wager between the two factions, Leiting and the New Cadet Regiment, was an official fight wager, which was why a referee from the academy would be present. This official wager was the result of agreement on both sides, because both sides were afraid that the other party would go back on their word.

Mind you, the results of an official fight wager were guaranteed by the academy. The moment the results were out, the wager would have to be fulfilled. Even if one party regretted the wager after the fact and wanted to renege on it, the other party could request for the school administration to step in and forcefully carry out the terms of the wager. Leiting was determined to obtain the New Cadet Regiment. In order to ensure nothing went wrong, they would certainly choose an official fight wager. Meanwhile, the New Cadet Regiment had similar concerns, so, without any objection, the wager this time naturally became an official fight wager.



"Shiyu, look. That youth by your younger cousin brother's side is so pretty, just like a girl. Is he participating as well?" The baby-faced youth seemed exasperated at the sheer incompetence on display, "Heavens, does the New Cadet Regiment not have anyone else? Actually sending out such a delicate youth to fight... how could they bear to do so<sup>2</sup>?"

Right then, Li Shiyu too laid eyes on Luo Lang's appearance, and he was instantly stunned. Another face floated into his mind's eye — different, yet equally beautiful — no, that other face was even lovelier than the face of this youth before him, so beautiful that it almost felt as if it should not appear in the human world...

Li Shiyu's heart abruptly spasmed violently — was this the reason why the heavens was unwilling to give his eldest cousin brother a healthy body? Because he did not belong to this common world to begin with, and needed to be reclaimed?

No, I will not allow it! Even if I have to fight against the heavens, I will keep Brother Mulan here!

Li Shiyu gripped the frame of the screen tightly, his fingers locked around it, savouring the pain travelling up through his fingers. It was as if this was the only way to soothe the wrenching pain in his heart. It was precisely due to this unbearable pain that he had chosen a different path without any regrets. Even if he would lose the inheritance rights to the Li family because of this, he would not regret it.

A crisp "Crack!" rang out — a piece of the screen's frame had actually been shattered by Li Shiyu's iron grip. Baby-face instantly jumped up and rushed over, taking Li Shiyu's hand in his even as he bemoaned, "Heavens, my points..." Although this box was theirs by right for the year, anything inside that was destroyed would still needed to be paid for.

## Chapter 246

### What Virtues Or Abilities Have You?

Baby-face carefully looked over Li Shiyu's fingers. Discovering no wounds, he instantly released a relieved sigh. If Li Shiyu's hands were at all damaged, he would definitely be dismembered by the senior colonel instructors of the military medical research branch of the medical faculty, and be made into a specimen to be experimented on.

Mind you, Li Shiyu was a gem in the hearts of all the instructors in the military medical research specialization. All the instructors wanted to take in Li Shiyu as their own true disciple. There had even been a large battle fought previously over the matter... In the end, the head of the military medical research branch Major General Qi had been unable to take it any longer, and had come out to declare Li Shiyu as the shared disciple of all the instructors; only then did the fighting stop. This was also one of the reasons why Li Shiyu was so exceptional in his specialization.

Seeing the worry on his friend's face, Li Shiyu's heart was moved. He took his hand back and said sheepishly, "Yun Xiu, I'm fine!"

"That's good then. What happened earlier that made you so angry?" asked Yun Xiu curiously. What exactly had triggered Li Shiyu?

Li Shiyu looked towards Yun Xiu, and sighed softly, "You still remember the grand armed melee that year? And that I wasn't in the school then?"

Yun Xiu remembered, nodded and said, "Yes, back then I had lamented that it was such a shame you had to miss it! Otherwise you could have already had a chance to cross blows with your younger cousin brother." Then, recalling how Li Shiyu had changed when he had returned, his tone became regretful as he said, "I had originally thought that you would apply for the mecha piloting specialization in the First Men's Military Academy. But unexpectedly, when you came back, you suddenly told me you wanted to become a military doctor! Until now, I still cannot understand it..."

At this point of his recollection, Yun Xiu's face was filled with confusion. Even now he still wanted to understand why, after just leaving for a brief stint of half a month, Li Shiyu had returned with completely different dreams and goals.



Even more so since Li Shiyu had been given the cold shoulder due to his decision. The second year after he chose to become a military doctor, Li Shiyu gained a newborn younger brother — this move by Li Shiyu's parents was proof that he had been abandoned by them <sup>1</sup>. This was because for one to become the family head of the Li family, one had to be the strongest mecha operator within the Li family. Thus, Li Shiyu's decision was a clear declaration that he was voluntarily giving up in the fight to be the first inheritor for the position of family head.

If Li Shiyu truly had no talent in mecha piloting, Yun Xiu would definitely have supported his good friend's decision. But the fact was that Li Shiyu's talent in mecha piloting was very high.

In these four years in the military academy, Li Shiyu had put his full effort into medical research, only using the bare minimum required by the military academy to train in mecha control. But despite that, Li Shiyu still had no difficulty in advancing to the early stages of advanced mecha warrior — it was clear to see how talented Li Shiyu actually was in mecha piloting. Every time this thought crossed his mind, Yun Xiu would lament the waste on behalf of his good friend.

In the face of his good friend's questioning, Li Shiyu only pursed his lips, but did not reply. However, due to his good friend's reminder, the incident that year appeared once more in the forefront of his mind...

That was when he had just reached the 10th year in the scout academy. He and his parents had been busy preparing for his application to the mecha piloting specialization in the First Men's Military Academy... but it was at this time when his grandfather, the current family head of the Li family, had suggested that he go visit his eldest cousin brother Li Mulan.

Ever since his eldest cousin brother had gone to planet Azure, he had never once returned to Doha. 10 years' time did not make Li Shiyu forget about his eldest cousin brother. Rather, with the passing of time, after becoming numb to the cold ruthlessness of the Li family members as they fought among themselves for power and authority, the memory of the unique warm aura of his cousin was almost stark in contrast, engraved even more deeply into his heart.

Thus, when his grandfather had suggested he take a vacation to visit his eldest cousin brother on planet Azure, he had gladly agreed. However, he could not have known that this visit would end up changing his entire life...

Li Shiyu recalled that pale face on that sickbed, those dull-coloured lips, that limp person half laid up on the bed... Still, that person had smiled so warmly at him — his smile so pure and clean, without any trace of resentment. His eldest cousin brother was not oblivious to the Li family's machinations, but he was still living without a care.

His eldest cousin brother's stamina was already very weak, unable to support speech for too long. Li Shiyu remembered how short the meeting with his cousin had been — only a brief ten or so minutes. During that time, his eldest cousin brother had not said anything about their family, only mentioning some of his own insights, such as how one should observe more, listen more, learn more, and think more — only then would one be able to see things clearer and project their thoughts further. Or, for example, how one should not blindly judge an incident or a person, for some incidents and people were not as simple as they appeared — how considering things from a few more angles would perhaps yield some new discovery. In the end, he had also said that the hardest things for people were tolerance and acceptance, especially when it came to some friends and relatives. Sometimes, if they made a mistake, one should not be so quick to heap on the blame — instead, give the other a chance to right the wrong. Sometimes, taking a step back may yield even better results... he had said with a laugh that, Li Yingjie, for example, who seemed so arrogant and bossy, was actually a good person at heart. Treat him with a bit more patience, and one may see more bright gleams of goodness and something different.

Though Li Shiyu had felt that these words were a little strange, as if his eldest cousin brother had been trying to hint at something, he had not thought much of it back then. He had just listened quietly as his cousin spoke, greedily absorbing more of the other's warmth<sup>2</sup>. This was something the Li family in Doha could not provide, so he was hungry for it. Only when he had seen the sweat pouring from his eldest cousin brother's forehead from the strain did he bid farewell and depart very reluctantly.

On the journey home, he settled down and contemplated those words his eldest cousin brother had said, and found something off about them. It was as if his eldest cousin brother had been trying to guide him — back then, he had already been suspicious, wondering why his eldest cousin brother would say all this...

Only when he returned to Doha and met his grandfather, who then told him personally that in future, his eldest cousin brother's role would be on his shoulders, did he come to a shocked realisation. His grandfather had sent him to visit his eldest cousin brother, not for any so-called kinship bonding, but for the purpose of letting his visit be an announcement to his cousin on the Li family's decision. He was the candidate

the Li family had selected to replace his eldest cousin brother as inheritor...

Li Shiyu was immediately consumed with regret. Due to his ignorance, his idiocy, his dim-wittedness — he had actually hurt his beloved eldest cousin brother by his own hand. He also hated the Li family's heartlessness. His eldest cousin brother's body was already so weak, and they had still given him such a heavy mental blow at this time — they had never intended for his eldest cousin brother to get better, hoping instead that he would just go ahead and die from the shock for their own ease of mind.

Yes, his eldest cousin brother was very intelligent! The moment he had seen him, his cousin had already understood what the Li family had decided. His eldest cousin brother had not reacted with resentment or rage, but had instead done all he could as an elder, giving his younger brother some advice and guidance, entrusting his hopes to him...

In his heartache, Li Shiyu rejoiced that he had left the Li family early on to enter the scout academy, thus saved from becoming cold-blooded like the rest of the Li family members. He directly refused his grandfather's arrangement, and said that, since the Li family had given up on his eldest cousin brother, then he would be the one to build his eldest cousin brother's future! The Li family people would no longer be allowed to interfere in his eldest cousin brother's life! As for the matter of the Li family inheritor, since Li Yingjie was interested, then they should just let Li Yingjie do it.

Yes, he disdained the position of Li family inheritor — he did not value this cold-blooded Li family.

He had long thought before that when he grew up to become someone strong enough to stand on his own, he would take his eldest cousin brother out of the Li family, the two of them completely cutting ties with this cold-blooded and heartless Li family <sup>3</sup>.

His grandfather had not been angered by his words. Instead, he asked him with a sneer — what was he basing his words on? If he became the family head, he might perhaps still be able to give Li Mulan a better life, otherwise, everything was just empty talk — he would not be able to give his cousin anything.

Subsequently, his grandfather had listed out the total fees of all the various consultations, medications, and high-grade medicinal agents spent on his eldest cousin brother all this while to Li Shiyu. To maintain Li Mulan's life, it was impossible without several million credits. If Li Mulan had not been a direct descendant of the

main branch, so the Li family had borne the costs, he would have long died from illness on planet Azure. The Li family had already done more than enough for Li Mulan. Now, they could not let the average Li Mulan continue to be the first inheritor, making the Li family the laughingstock of the top elite families.

This was the true opinion of a family head. Li Shiyu had been very disappointed — he had thought that his grandfather had truly loved his eldest cousin brother, only sending him to the distant planet Azure to protect him, distancing him from the cruel struggles within the main camp of the Li family. Reality proved that he had been too idealistic. There was no such thing as kinship and blood relation within the Li family; profit was the only thing tying parents and siblings together — there was only calculation, and using one another. Perhaps his grandfather had simply not wanted to keep seeing this disgrace of the Li family, thus sending eldest cousin brother so far away for his own peace of mind.

Li Shiyu was sad and indignant, reflexively wanting to fight back with barbed words. But when the words came to his lips, he recalled those words his eldest cousin brother had said to him back at planet Azure, that he should learn to tolerate...

Yes, if he became at odds with his grandfather, and let his parents know his true thoughts, it might end up harming his eldest cousin brother.

Li Shiyu knew very well how ruthless his parents could be with their methods. Once they found out that his eldest cousin brother was the reason why he had refused to be the first inheritor, they might very likely employ dirty means to eliminate the problem. This was not something he wished to see; he did not want his eldest cousin brother to be harmed any further due to him. Thus, Li Shiyu was silent. He only said that he would return and think about it.

His grandfather had looked at him contemplatively — that one glance almost making him think he had been seen through — but his grandfather had not said anything on it. He had only informed him that he still had a year's time to consider, but once he began schooling at the military academy, that would be the final deadline. As he left, his grandfather had also reminded him that he could come discuss things over with him whenever he had the time.

The words 'discuss things over' were said with especial emphasis; Li Shiyu understood the hidden meaning behind his grandfather's words. If he agreed to accept the position of first inheritor, his grandfather would be willing to pay some price, such

as continuing to pay for Li Mulan's medical expenses for a while longer or something.

Li Shiyu thought for a very long time after returning to the scout academy. He had also considered his grandfather's suggestion — to become the family head, and then hold up the sky for his eldest cousin brother <sup>4</sup>, allowing him to live securely under his wing...

Yet, Li Shiyu could not fool himself. By the time he truly obtained the rights of family head, it would be thirty to forty years later at least, while his eldest cousin brother's body did not seem like it could hold out for so long. Only by finding the best doctors in the Federation as soon as possible, the best medicine, the best resources, would he have any hope of extending his eldest cousin brother's life.

Li Shiyu did not hope for his eldest cousin brother to die young. Right now, the human lifespan was already infinitely close to 200 years — he wished that his cousin would at least live beyond 150 years... to achieve this goal, he could only find a way to heal his eldest cousin brother as soon as possible.

At present, what Li Shiyu wanted, he did not have, so it was impossible to rely on any outside power. As for the Li family, his grandfather had already spoken. The Li family had already done their duty by his eldest cousin brother — the age of maturity in the Federation was 20; the Li family would only support him till then. After that, they would no longer continue to pay for those massive medical fees of his eldest cousin brother. According to his grandfather's words, since he would be an adult then, he should be fully responsible for himself.

This meant that there could only be one path before him. Four years later, he needed to possess a large amount of credits, enough to replace the Li family's role in supporting his cousin's exorbitant medical fees. However, at that time, he would still only be a cadet, so he would never be able to afford it. Moreover, the Li family would only give Li family descendants the necessary credits for daily living, not a credit more. Before maturity, even if they earned any credits, those credits would be claimed by the Li family accounts — he would not see a single bit of it.

For those few days, he was plagued with worry, with no mind at all to bother with anything else around him. Even though the 10th grade had been beaten so soundly by the 7th grade that they did not dare to lift their heads, he had not noticed. Every day, he was thinking about his and his eldest cousin brother's future. Just when he was at his wit's end and was preparing himself to lower his head and negotiate with his

grandfather, an application brochure from the military academy illuminated a path for him.

The military academy not only had mecha piloting, but countless other specializations as well, and one of them was the military medical research specialization which was held in very high esteem by the military. Meanwhile, military doctors were definitely the best among the Federation doctors. As such, they had the opportunity to work with medicinal agents that had been secretly formulated by the Federation. In particular, there were certain forbidden medicines that only top-level military doctors could access.

Therefore, instead of begging others for medicinal agents and resources, he might as well become a top-level military doctor himself and earn the right to take those medicines and resources. Li Shiyu's gaze had sparkled; he had finally found a path by which he could save his eldest cousin brother.

Li Shiyu did not rush. He immediately went home and had a sincere talk with his grandfather. When he had told the other of his decision, he remembered his grandfather asking him if he would ever regret it.

Li Shiyu remembered that he had smiled as he replied, saying that he did not want to become a puppet controlled by power and profit. He was not heartless enough to abandon his own blood brothers... and since that was the case, he would follow his heart. He would not regret it.

When he bid farewell to his grandfather, he could vaguely hear his grandfather muttering these words: *Li Mulan, what virtues or abilities have you* <sup>5</sup>...

# Chapter 247

## Wager!

Right at that moment, a human figure slowly walked onto the stage. That person was about 30 years old and was dressed in the alternating blue-white military uniform of the Federation. He had a handsome face and a stately build — by simply standing on the stage, he drew everyone's eye.

"Ah, the referee is here." The person's age and military uniform which differed from the cadets clearly marked him as the referee sent by the academy.

"Heavens, the referee the school sent is actually Colonel Tang Yu <sup>1</sup>!" When an eagle-eyed student noticed who the referee on the stage was, he could not help but yell out in shock.

"What?! Colonel Tang Yu, that ace instructor who cultivated the Thunder King, the number one in the school?" As the news spread among the students, even those who had not known Colonel Tang Yu before this also began exclaiming in awe.

Mind you, Colonel Tang Yu was the strongest among the instructors of mecha piloting — it was rumoured that he was already an ace operator. Besides that, in one of the teams he led, which had 6 students in total, the Thunder King was just a half-step away from advancing to ace status, while the other five in the team had all successfully advanced to special-class operator. Undoubtedly, he was the superstar ace instructor of the military academy — rumour had it that after he was done mentoring this batch of students till their 4th year, he would be able to mentor a new batch of 2nd years starting next year.

Perhaps Colonel Tang Yu had willingly taken on the role of referee just so he could take a look at the abilities of this year's intake? After all, these people could be his students of tomorrow... of course, it was even more likely that he had already begun taking in students, so perhaps this wagered fight was also an assessment of Colonel Tang Yu's for the new cadets?

All of the senior students stared enviously at the five freshmen standing on the stage. Even if these students were defeated in this fight, as long as they performed decently

and caught Colonel Tang Yu's eye, their futures would be immeasurable. It had to be said that this year's freshmen were just too lucky.

The mecha instructors of the military academy did not mentor their personal students up till the 6th year, typically only mentoring them till their 3rd year. As the freshmen were focused on their physical conditioning for the first year, busy building up the proper foundations, the mecha instructors would only take in students beginning from the second year. After mentoring them to the 4th year, their focused mentorship would end. Since the 5th and 6th year students were basically in the process of prepping for graduation, they typically had two options. One, was to go join some adventuring groups on some intergalactic adventuring mission to increase their own real-world battle experience; the other, was to enter the armed forces directly and begin an internship. Of course, those who chose the second option were all the best the school had to offer, typically already being noticed in their 4th year for their exceptional performance. By their 5th year, the military division which had its eye on them would issue them an internship offer letter and take them away...

Of course, those 4th year students who performed well this year were pretty much all aiming for the newly established 23rd Division — not because they would have more opportunity to shine in a new division, but because the commander of the 23rd Division was one of the twelve god-class operators of the Federation, General Ling Xiao. He was the idol of all the cadets — the Thunder King was rushing so much to advance to ace operator this year precisely because he wanted General Ling Xiao to know of his existence. With that, he would have a chance to be noticed by the other and obtain that precious internship offer letter.

An internship offer letter did not mean that one would be able to remain at that division at the end of the 2-year internship, but as long as one performed within acceptable standards, one would normally not be dismissed by the division.

At this time, seeing the appearance of Colonel Tang Yu, those within the boxes frowned. Anyone with a brain could tell that the academy's arrangements this time seemed to hint at some deeper intent.

Only Yun Xiu in Li Shiyu's box continued to fret obliviously, "With Colonel Tang Yu as referee, won't he be biased towards Leiting? After all, the Thunder King Qiao Ting is his favoured disciple."

Li Shiyu instantly rolled his eyes at his friend at these words, having no desire at all to



even respond.

However, this somewhat moronic question of Yun Xiu's had pulled him out of his memories. Even though his mood remained solemn and heavy, he was no longer caught up in the past. As a result of these few years of research, Li Shiyu was increasingly confident that he would be able to take over his eldest cousin brother's medical expenses before his rite of passage to adulthood.

These past few years, the research studies Li Shiyu had participated in had all yielded tremendous results — besides one forbidden medicine that was restricted for military use, the yields of the other studies could be generalised for public use. As such, to reward him, the academy had given Li Shiyu many awards, which included a large sum of credits.

Back then, Li Shiyu had already told his instructors of his personal situation back home, so these credits were currently stored within the accounts of those instructors.

Of course, the greatest profit was not the school's reward, but the sale of his patent rights. After learning of Li Shiyu's situation, during the forging of the contract with the manufacturer, his instructor had specially requested for the main researcher Li Shiyu to not be directly reimbursed with credits, instead asking for company shares of equivalent value. The interest gained from those shares every year was clearly stipulated to be transferred into Li Shiyu's account once he became an adult. Li Shiyu was overjoyed by this outcome; he was filled with gratitude towards that instructor. This would undoubtedly give him a long-term steady source of income, helping him eliminate future worries.

Seeing Li Shiyu's face recover from its pained expression, Yun Xiu let out an internal sigh of relief. He had not expected that his thoughtless question on why Li Shiyu had changed his mind to study military medicine would cause his good friend so much pain.

His twisted expression had let Yun Xiu know without words that Li Shiyu must have encountered some painful event back then. Yun Xiu could not help but regret his rashness and try to do something to fix things. When he saw Colonel Tang Yu step onto the stage, an idea sparked and he had immediately blurted an extremely stupid question to draw Li Shiyu's attention. Now, it looked like his ploy had been quite effective — Li Shiyu had really returned from his memories, and his expression was now much more natural.

As a cadet, Yun Xiu naturally knew that all the instructors of the military academy were righteous military men. They would never do such an obviously biased thing, and Colonel Tang Yu, who was especially widely lauded for being upstanding, was even more unlikely to do such a thing.



Within the Wuji box <sup>2</sup>, seeing Colonel Tang Yu step onto the stage, Li Lanfeng and the others also made sounds of shock and surprise. Who would have expected this great god to appear on such a small arena stage...?

Li Lanfeng's hand which was holding his drink jerked. He could not help but look towards the five representatives of the New Cadet Regiment, a trace of pensiveness in his gaze. Among these people of the New Cadet Regiment, which one was it that had such formidable backing, able to affect the typical style of the military academy? Even the top elite family, the Li family, did not have the capability. Even if the Li family could influence the decision of the president of the Federation, they would not be able to budge the Federation military. And since the military academy was part of the military system, even the president would not be able to order the military academy around...

A small smile appeared on Li Lanfeng's lips as he thought: *How interesting, looks like this fight of Leiting's won't be as easy as they thought!*



The moment Colonel Tang Yu was on the stage, he coughed loudly, and the initial furore caused by the colonel's appearance instantly died down. Colonel Tang Yu smiled faintly and then said, "Today, I will be the referee for this fight between the New Cadet Regiment and Leiting. I will judge fairly according to the rules. If there is any dissatisfaction with the results, or any complaints on my decisions as referee, you may request an arbitration with the arbitration committee of the academy..."

That said, Tang Yu glanced at the five representatives of both sides. Seeing the steady expressions on both sides, he nodded slightly, approving at the quality of the representatives chosen.

He continued to say, "This fight is best three of five, to be fought by five representatives from each side. To ensure fairness, the five participating representatives are not announced beforehand. One minute before the fight begins, the leader of each team is

to submit the name list <sup>3</sup> of the representatives participating in the fight to me. Remember — once the name list is in my hands, no more changes are allowed, or else the side which makes any changes will be immediately considered to forfeit."

Seeing both sides nod in understanding, Tang Yu continued, "One more thing. There is a wager on this fight as agreed by both sides. Before the fighting begins, the wager needs to be stated clearly. The school rules dictate that the contents of the wager shall not go against anything expressly forbidden by the military academy..."

At this point of his speech, Tang Yu paused, his cold gaze slashing like a knife across the faction members of both sides seated on the spectating platform, causing those people to feel a shiver in their hearts. Those students who were slightly weaker actually felt cold sweat break out all over their bodies.

"As Leiting is the challenger, please enter your wager into the military academy mainframe." Tang Yu indicated for the Leiting Mecha Clan to submit their wager into the mainframe.

Very quickly, on the large screen behind the arena stage, the contents of the wager was displayed. It was very simple, only one sentence. The contents of the wager read: *If Leiting wins, all members of the New Cadet Regiment shall collectively join Leiting!*

The appearance of this wager made all the spectators break out into a commotion once more. Even the audience within the boxes could no longer keep their composure, overwhelmed with surprise.

"Why this wager? Isn't Leiting very particular about the quality of their members? Why do they want to take the entire group? Could it be that there's some secret about the New Cadet Regiment that we do not know?"

All the leading people of the various factions began to cry out — they could not believe what they were seeing. They had initially believed that Leiting would request for the New Cadet Regiment to disband, and then aim to absorb a portion of the more talented new cadets into Leiting. They would then be able to take advantage of the chaos while the members of the New Cadet Regiment were still filled with anger and hate at Leiting to snatch away a portion of the talented new cadets.

However, this wager of Leiting's threw all their ideal calculations out of the window. Leiting's method of taking the whole pot for themselves without sharing a single

errant drop made them extremely dissatisfied.

In the Wuji box, Han Yu and the others were similarly shocked beyond belief. He and Wei Ji shared baffled glances, the confusion evident on their faces.

They reflexively looked towards Li Lanfeng, hoping he would be able to give them an answer. Although they were extremely apprehensive of Li Lanfeng, they still believed fully in Li Lanfeng's analytical abilities. Many times when they were unable to figure things out, Li Lanfeng could strike right at the heart of the matter <sup>4</sup>.

Li Lanfeng met their gazes and opened his mouth to say, "I too do not know why Leiting would do this. But I'm certain that the New Cadet Regiment must have something that Leiting values." Han Yu and Wei Ji nodded; they knew enough to figure this out for themselves.

"In the previous period of time, the major factions were all working on deciphering the data of the entrance evaluations of the new cadets. I wonder if Leiting has obtained that info." Li Lanfeng did not draw things out, plainly stating his thoughts to the two.

It was not that Li Lanfeng did not want to keep things to himself, but he knew that, even if he said nothing, Han Yu and Wei Ji would still have been able to think of this after a few days at the latest. In that case, he might as well be frank, to better give the other two the impression that he really had nothing to hide from the two of them. Moreover, the most important secret was still in his hands. This little bit of trivial news — Li Lanfeng truly did not consider it anything of real worth.

# Chapter 248

## Luo Lang Fights!

"Could it be that the results of this batch of students are all pretty good? Even if there are some who are a bit weaker, in order not to waste anything, they decided to take in everyone?" mused Han Yu, following the logical flow of Li Lanfeng's comment.

Wei Ji said in agreement, "This New Cadet Regiment is from Doha, with most of the students from Doha's Central Scout Academy. Their abilities won't be too far off the mark. Taking all of them in, Leiting would not lose anything. But I suspect this matter will not be that simple... could it be some scheme of Leiting's? His objective may not be the entire New Cadet Regiment, but a particular person within the New Cadet Regiment. However, in consideration that that person may be proud and unruly, he decided he might as well take in the whole lot?" Wei Ji raised another possibility.

"That aberrant Zhang Jing-an mentioned?" exclaimed Han Yu, as if coming to some realisation, his eyes shining.

That aberrant, who Zhang Jing-an was afraid of, would most certainly not be someone easy to bring to heel. Perhaps Leiting was afraid that if they targeted him alone, the aberrant might not have any reservations, thus ending up like that 4th year genius mecha modifier, stubborn to the end, still unwilling to submit even now. Perhaps after that experience, Leiting had chosen to change their methods. By taking in the entire group, that aberrant would have no choice but to consider his companions beside him, and thus lower his head and submit.

"A feint! Certainly a great strategy!" sighed Han Yu, a trace of admiration in his gaze, "Even if Qiao Ting isn't around, the vice regiment commander Lin Zhidong is not someone to cross."

A faction could not last for long by relying on one person's strength alone. Leiting had been able to remain as the top faction in the military academy for so many consecutive years due to the exceptional vice regiment commanders it had, especially the adviser Lin Zhidong. Although this first vice regiment commander was not from the strategy specialization, he was no less capable than those of the specialization.

Li Lanfeng did not refute the two's suppositions, merely nodding in agreement as he smiled softly. However, the gazes of the four were then drawn once more by the stage, for the representative of the New Cadet Regiment had emerged. It was the public regiment commander Wu Jiong. He had been the one to step up and accept the wager with Leiting, as well as raise their own conditions for the wager. If by any chance the Leiting Mecha Clan lost, then they would have to be responsible for the safety of the New Cadet Regiment for the next two years. This meant that, in those two years' time, if some other faction challenged the New Cadet Regiment, all the fights would be the Leiting Mecha Clan's responsibility.

This wager would in fact indirectly make the entire Leiting Mecha Clan into the fighters and protectors of the New Cadet Regiment, but in comparison with Leiting's wager, the New Cadet Regiment's wager was not that unreasonable. Since Leiting wanted to consume the entire New Cadet Regiment, the New Cadet Regiment naturally could also request Leiting to become their helpers. Besides, the New Cadet Regiment did not have ill intentions — they only stated a period of two years, leaving Leiting no way to refuse.

As expected, the vice regiment commanders of Leiting very quickly agreed to the terms after a brief discussion. After all, Leiting too did not want the other factions to covet the promising New Cadet Regiment. If Leiting lost by any chance, this would ensure the cadets would not be taken in by any other faction in the upcoming two years. And two years later, Leiting would have another chance to consume the New Cadet Regiment. Therefore, this wager had no downsides from Leiting's perspective.

When Colonel Tang Yu declared that the wager was established, the upper ranks of all the factions could not help but sigh. With this, even if the New Cadet Regiment won by a fluke, they could do nothing within the next two years. No matter how tempting the regiment was, they could only watch without doing anything, because they still did not have the guts to go up against the Leiting Mecha Clan...

At this time, they could not help but exclaim in admiration at the strategic thinking of the New Cadet Regiment, coming up with a wager that Leiting could not refuse. Whether they won or lost, the New Cadet Regiment would still obtain the protection of the large tree of Leiting — it was all just a matter of duration.

After the wager was agreed upon, all the representatives of the Leiting Mecha Clan and the New Cadet Regiment walked off the stage, to await the start of the first match. Colonel Tang Yu had already mentioned the rules of the fight. For each match, both

sides would have five minutes' time to arrange things. Within those five minutes, each side must decide the candidate for their team. If they did not submit a name within the given time, the referee would give the victory to the opposing side.

Walking off the stage, Ling Lan looked pensively at the people on Leiting's side. Earlier on the stage, she had secretly evaluated those people's skill level, and had a rough idea of their capabilities in her mind. However, other than herself who could beat anyone handily, it would be a little risky for Qi Long and the others... Ling Lan furrowed her brow slightly, beginning to consider the order they would use for the arena fights.

This time, Ling Lan had chosen Qi Long, Wu Jiong, Luo Lang, Li Yingjie, and herself to be the fighting representatives. Originally, she had wanted to see how the opponent would send out their candidates before making her final arrangements. However, Colonel Tang Yu's speech threw her plans out. Concealing the name list before announcing it at the final moment made Ling Lan lose all direction.

*"Boss, have you forgotten that you still have me?"* Just when Ling Lan was fretting, Little Four began making a ruckus moodily inside the mindspace. Of course he was moody — why did Boss always forget his existence during these critical moments? It should be known that he was the best cheating device!

*"Fie fie fie, what was that random thought just now? I, Little Four, am a youth of five virtues<sup>1</sup> — I would never do such a tasteless thing as cheating,"* said Little Four, happily justifying his own actions and twisting words, *"We are fighting a great battle of information! Taking the initiative by procuring information on the opponent is the bedrock of success — all of this is just the means in service to this ultimate end! History shall be written by the victors!"* Little Four had recently become addicted to military stories; who knew where he had stolen this particular block of text from...

Little Four was still throwing words around to extol the virtues of his behaviour, while Ling Lan's eyes had lit up at Little Four's timely interruption. That's right! How had she forgotten that Little Four was a god of the virtual world? If she wanted to know the name list the opponent had set, wasn't it just a simple matter? Her only hope was that the opponent would not choose to key in their selection at the last second. Otherwise, even if Little Four could obtain the information, she still would not have the time to enter her own selection.

Little Four had finally re-established his own self-image, soothing his soul, and he immediately sensed Ling Lan's concerns. In response, he said disdainfully, *"With me,*

*Little Four, around, would you still need to enter it manually? You only need to think of the name in your head, and I, Little Four, will be able to instantaneously send it over..."* Such a simple matter — why did his boss have to worry so much? Wasn't this just making light of his, Little Four's, abilities? Little Four could not help but pout in silent protest of Ling Lan's lack of faith in him.

Seeing this demeanour of Little Four's, Ling Lan's heart settled. In a great mood, she kneaded Little Four's face inside the mindspace, laughing loudly as she said, *"Good. Little Four, I leave this matter to you."* Only within the mindspace would Ling Lan laugh so unreservedly. The smile behind the laugh made Little Four lose focus... Boo hoo hoo, why did the charm of Boss's smile seem to have increased limitlessly once more?

Thinking of this, Little Four once again reaffirmed that it was safer for Boss to remain slackfaced. Otherwise, even though he was a god in the virtual world, he would be reduced to a puddle of goo by his Boss's smile... Little Four abruptly recalled that he seemed to have very low resistance against Daddy Ling Xiao's smile too — could it be that smiles were his fatal weakness?

At this thought, Little Four suddenly felt a sense of danger invade his heart. This was because he remembered that intelligent bio-entities could not be found to have any obvious weaknesses, otherwise they would be recalled for repurposing. Little Four shiftily looked around, and finding no other intelligent bio-entities in the area, only then did he relax. He pounded his chest — luckily he was not in the Mandora star system right now, so no other intelligent bio-entity had observed his abnormality.

Little Four had barely settled from his fright when Ling Lan came up with another question. Even though she may know the skill levels of those people, she had no way to match the person to the name on the opponent's name list.

Little Four became absorbed by Ling Lan's question instantly, forgetting his earlier fright. When he figured out what his boss was worried about this time, he could not help but roll his eyes contemptuously at his boss. D\*mmmit, and he had thought what kind of difficult problem his boss had now... it turned out to be such a small matter!

Very swiftly, the named datasheets of the Leiting representatives appeared in Ling Lan's mindspace, along with a 3D rendition of their appearance. Ling Lan quickly matched the people to their names — now, the moment the opponent entered the names, Ling Lan would be able to tell which level their physical skills were at, and make the appropriate counter.



With this, Ling Lan's mind was greatly eased. Ling Lan was prepared once more to mimic Tianji's horse racing — sending out the fighters on her side strategically according to the strength level of the opponent. As long as they won three matches in the end, the New Cadet Regiment would have the right to their own freedom!

*"Boss, the opponent's name list is out!"* Little Four yelled out in the mindspace, and then the opponent's fighting order and corresponding image were displayed in Ling Lan's mindspace.

*"D\*mmmit, actually starting off with the third strongest. Looks like the opponent is also guarding against this strategy of mine, actively working to win this competition."* Ling Lan could not help but frown as she read over the other's name list; the opponent had indeed dealt a good hand.

Ling Lan turned to look at her companions beside her, and her gaze finally landed on Luo Lang. "Luo Lang, get ready to fight!"

"Yes, Boss!" Luo Lang's pretty face lighted up — he had not expected Boss to send him up for the very first match.

Meanwhile, seeing that Ling Lan had chosen Luo Lang, without waiting for her to give the order, Little Four instantly sent Luo Lang's name to the referee Tang Yu.

Observing Luo Lang's excited expression, Ling Lan had no choice but to be a wet blanket and calm him down a little. With a stern expression, she said, "The opponent is a master at the peak of early stage Qi-Jin, while you have just entered Qi-Jin. The Qi-Jin in your body has not settled yet, and so is unsuitable for a hard confrontation. Draw things out to start, and then figure something out after you've gotten used to the pace."

Ling Lan had chosen Luo Lang because Luo Lang currently needed a tough fight to help him stabilise his realm of first level early stage Qi-Jin. This was also why Ling Lan had not gone up first to just win the match. Even as she ensured the final victory would be theirs, Ling Lan hoped for her companions to improve through the fights.

Ling Lan knew her arrangement might cause Luo Lang to suffer a tough fight, perhaps even being beaten very badly; however, for the sake of her companions' growth, she needed to harden her heart. Sometimes, losing was not a disgrace, but a type of progress.

"Understood, Boss!" Luo Lang nodded his pretty head seriously, showing that he had

heard her advice.

Right at this moment, the five minutes ran out. Colonel Tang Yu shouted from the stage, "Leiting Mecha Clan vs New Cadet Regiment — first round matchup: 5th year Qi Ya against 1st year Luo Lang."

# Chapter 249

## Still a Little Ways Off!

Luo Lang took in a deep breath. Although he knew the opponent was stronger than him, Luo Lang did not want to give up just like that — he wanted to help Boss out. Even if he knew it would be very difficult to achieve the outcome he wanted, he still wanted to try.

When Luo Lang walked onto the stage, a commotion broke out among the people watching below. "What's this? The New Cadet Regiment is actually sending out such a skinny weakling? Could it be the New Cadet Regiment is prepared to throw this match?"

"Look, is that fellow really a guy? He looks even prettier than a girl!" Who knows who yelled this out, causing the crowd's attention to swiftly turn away from Luo Lang's thin and slender frame to his lovely face.

"F\*ck, it can't be a girl dressed up as a guy, right?" Some random lecher was in raptures at the sight, beginning to indulge in wild fantasy.

Of course, his fanciful delusions received the contempt of the students beside him — did he really think this was those olden times? Able to impersonate a man just by putting on some guy clothes? Upon entrance to the military academy, the first thing they had to go through was a physical check-up. That had been conducted before everyone else, where they had all been naked... well, alright, the examining teachers were very reasonable, and would allow you to use your hands to cover your willy.

Of course, these scornful cadets looking disdainfully at that lecher would never ever imagine that there truly was someone who had blatantly enrolled into the First Men's Military Academy as a girl to study. During that physical check-up, this person had naturally been exempted via special privilege by a particular national idol general who loved his daughter deeply...

In one of the boxes on the second floor, Luo Lang's beautiful face and his delicate and seemingly easy to overpower figure made a person's eyes shine. A covetous smile grew on that person's lips as he mumbled to himself, "Who could have expected that there

would be such a stunner among this year's freshmen..." He licked his lips, deciding that he would obtain the other by any means necessary <sup>1</sup>.



Leiting's candidate, Qi Ya, was a 5th year cadet, currently still at the academy for his last few courses. As his physical skills combat ability was extremely outstanding, in order to ensure victory, Lin Zhidong had personally invited him to represent them. Sending Qi Ya out as vanguard was a calculated move on Lin Zhidong's part.

Ling Lan was not the only one who had thought of Tianji's horse racing; Lin Zhidong too had thought of the same principle. He was afraid that the New Cadet Regiment would send out their third strongest to fight against the weakest in his party, catching him off guard and thus causing Leiting to lose the first match. Lin Zhidong knew well that the first match was key — morale would lean towards the side who won. Lin Zhidong did not want to let the New Cadet Regiment obtain that advantage, and so had chosen the third strongest in Leiting's party, Qi Ya, to fight first, guaranteeing the final outcome.

Lin Zhidong's thought process was, even if the opponent planned to fight in the order of their strength levels, he would not lose out by sending out the third strongest now. As long as they won this match, he would still have the two strongest at hand — no matter what, victory would be theirs. Although Lin Zhidong was somewhat wary of that mysterious 'aberrant', he still had more faith in those two strongest combatants below the Thunder King.

Qi Ya saw how delicate his opponent was, just like a girl, and was instantly filled with displeasure. The gaze he directed at Luo Lang carried a clear trace of contempt. Instead of becoming angered by the opponent's attitude, Luo Lang was pleased. The more the opponent looked down on him, the better his chances to achieve an upset.

Of course, Luo Lang had not forgotten Ling Lan's earlier instructions. So, the moment he got onto the stage, even though Colonel Tang Yu had not given the signal to start, Luo Lang's entire body was keyed up in readiness. Despite looking no different from his usual standing posture, anyone with a keen eye would be able to tell from his low-hanging arms and slightly bent waist that Luo Lang would be able to unleash his strength in an explosive burst to handle any sudden shifts in the situation.

Colonel Tang Yu was an ace mecha operator, but he was also a combat expert.

Otherwise, the academy would not have sent him to be the referee of this fight. Seeing Luo Lang's stance, a gleam of light no one else could see flashed through his eyes. However, when he glanced towards Qi Ya, his brow creased almost imperceptibly...

Tang Yu raised his right hand expressionlessly, and with a sharp wave, he shouted, "Begin!"

Luo Lang had initially thought to stay on the defensive, drawing out the fight with the other for a bit. Unexpectedly, the opponent did not put up any defence at all. He stood sluggishly, his entire person slouched and seemingly unprepared. Seeing this, a thought sparked through Luo Lang's mind and with a spring off his right foot, his entire body pounced from one side of the stage to the other like a cannonball, striking hard and fast towards the opponent.

Seeing this attack of Luo Lang's, Tang Yu's eyebrows rose slightly, somewhat surprised. He had determined that Luo Lang's original stance had been largely defensive; however, Luo Lang had been able to switch from that stance instantly into offence. Moreover, he had done so without any interruption in his movements, the transition smooth and flawless. It was clear to see that Luo Lang's control over his muscles had reached an extremely high realm.

Even though Luo Lang's body may lean towards the delicate side, not as buff, and with slightly weaker resilience compared to the average boy, this control over his muscles allowed him to compensate for his body's weakness. It could be said that Luo Lang had already developed a combat style appropriate for his body type. This was most definitely a youth who possessed extremely great talent in combat.

Right then, Tang Yu could not help but be pleased by this discovery of talent. This type of ability would undoubtedly be a great help to mecha piloting. As long as Luo Lang's physical condition could pass the 1st year's evaluation, Tang Yu believed he would be unable to refrain from taking in such a talented student.

Luo Lang's attack was undoubtedly sudden. The unprepared Qi Ya took fright, but he was after all a 5th year — in terms of combat, he was very experienced. He would not become flustered like those newbies, choosing to lash out thoughtlessly in his panic. Instead, he retreated calmly and rapidly, trying to put some distance between him and his opponent so he would have enough space to gather his strength and counterattack.

Although Luo Lang was a 1st year military academy cadet, his battle experience was

not weak either. Mind you, his companion Qi Long was a battle maniac, dragging his friends off to spar whenever he had the time. Luo Lang was undoubtedly the one who had been dragged off the most <sup>2</sup> — though Xie Yi had joined in after that, the frequency still had not dropped by much. The natural result of all this fighting was a wealth of experience.

Luo Lang saw his opponent retreating and instantly knew what the other was plotting. Having the initiative, how could he let go of this advantage? Thus, on the arena stage, two figures could be seen dancing around the stage, one in constant close pursuit of the other. Due to the extremely high speed, the spectating students actually saw the action as a streak of shadow moving across the stage.

Watching this scene, Lin Zhidong could not help but harrumph and say, "I was surprisingly right. The opponent really had been planning to use the principle of Tianji's horse racing... luckily I had taken measures to counter this, or else the opponent might really have taken the first match." If he had sent out the weakest in his team, whose skills were not much stronger than the other, at that time, it would have been hard to determine for certain which side would win. But now, victory was sure to be theirs... Although Lin Zhidong's combat ability was not that strong, he firmly believed that with Qi Ya's strength, he would never lose to a 1st year freshman.

On the stage, Qi Ya saw that no matter how hard he tried to retreat, the other was sticking like sticky-candy to him — he could not pull away no matter what. He felt that this performance of his was really too disgraceful, and rage surged in his heart. He began to hate Luo Lang who he had initially looked down upon... he would definitely teach this detestable fellow before him a brutal lesson.

Even though he was currently at a total disadvantage, with his capabilities, he would still be able to defeat the other.

Having full confidence in himself, Qi Ya did not want to retreat any longer. He abruptly halted his steps, and with a loud bellow, the Qi-Jin in his body gathered rapidly to surge into his right hand, where he then thrust out his right palm in a fierce strike towards Luo Lang.

"Alright!" shouted Luo Lang, seeing the other stop running and choosing instead to circulate his Qi to fight him head on. His long ready right fist punched out powerfully at the opponent.

This move of Luo Lang's seemed to go against Ling Lan's instructions at the start, but Luo Lang did not think he was doing anything wrong. He had managed to take the initiative and take control of the flow of the fight from the start due to the opponent's underestimation of him. Plus, the other had attacked from an emergency stop, so the power he could put into his blow would definitely not be as substantial as his own. Thus, Luo Lang felt that even if he met this blow of the opponent's head on, he would not lose, and may even have an overwhelming advantage.

And so, a fist and a palm crashed into each other, sending a muffled whump ringing out across the stage. With Luo Lang and Qi Ya at its centre, a powerful swirl of wind swept out over the surrounding audience.

However, there were Qi-Jin absorbing facilities around the edges of the stage, hence the students sitting below could not feel any of this invisible force. Still, even so, everyone knew that this strike was certainly not as simple or casual as it appeared to be.

The two fighters were frozen in place for several seconds — three perhaps, or maybe just one — and then the two of them were abruptly sent flying back from their stalled state. Luo Lang had been on top to begin with, so when he was sent flying, he immediately flipped into a somersault to dissipate the rest of the force, and then landed soundly on the ground.

Meanwhile, Qi Ya retreated a whole three steps before finding stable footing again, though his face flushed deeply. His complexion quickly returned to normal, but from the perspective of those keen of eye, Qi Ya most likely lost out by a hair in this collision.

The spectating students looked at one another — they had not expected what they believed would be a one-sided fight to be such a close fight instead. It was to the extent that in that last strike, the 1st year Luo Lang had vaguely gained the upper hand, while the 5th year Qi Ya seemed to have lost out in comparison.

Some new cadets became exhilarated watching the proceedings. Even though they had hoped in their hearts that the new cadets would be able to achieve something in the fights, upholding their pride, they knew reality would not be that easy. Furthermore, Luo Lang had seemed unbelievably scrawny, making them lose all hope from the start. Who could have expected that that youth who was as pretty as a picture on the stage could actually fight so well, going at it so fiercely from the beginning, and then even suppressing the opponent in this last encounter... Could it be that the New Cadet

Regiment's arrogance in accepting the wagered fight was not purely out of stubborn pride, but because they truly had the strength to back them up?

Tentative hope rose in these new cadets' hearts. If the New Cadet Regiment really won... they, as freshmen, would undoubtedly have a better refuge. Compared to those pre-existing factions, the New Cadet Regiment which was made up of freshmen like them was certainly much more acceptable in their minds.

Thus thought the spectating students — and even on Leiting's side, quite a few faces had shifted slightly. After all, Qi Ya was their third strongest fighter; if he lost... the situation would not look good for Leiting.

Seeing the disquiet of his companions, one of the strongest fighters in Leiting quietly explained some things to the people around him. Consequently, those people relaxed and began to smile in relief.

"Luo Lang, is still a little ways off <sup>3</sup>," Ling Lan sighed as she shook her head lightly.



# Chapter 250

## Innate Talent Activated!

Luo Lang may have had the upper hand for the entire fight so far, but the difference in their skill levels made this blow of Luo Lang's utterly ineffective. In contrast, although the opponent may appear to have taken a blow, Luo Lang's stride was broken, causing the two fighters to once again return to the equal ground they were in at the start.

Ling Lan could see that Luo Lang himself, within the fight, had come to understand that his advantage had been lost after that strike, which was why he had not chosen to press his attack. Instead, he cautiously chose to defend, and the two fighters once again faced each other in a standoff.

Standing to one side, Tang Yu saw Luo Lang's actions and nodded silently. This 1st year student did not become reckless and overconfident due to his advantageous position at the start. He could clearly sense the change in the flow of the situation, quickly shifting to defence when he saw his advantage disappear. It was clear to see that he was level-headed and rational — he was definitely a good seedling to be a mecha warrior.

The more Tang Yu observed Luo Lang, the more he liked him. Right now, the only thing holding Luo Lang back from becoming an excellent mecha operator, was his scrawny frame. Tang Yu could not help but wonder whether he should go to his old friend who specialized in medicine, and take several tubes of their newly developed gene agent S-modification... he had heard that its effects were even better than the special-class gene agents...

As the referee Tang Yu's thoughts went off on a tangent, Qi Ya, who was across from Luo Lang, had rallied himself mentally to attack despite looking as insouciant as before. If Luo Lang impulsively chose to attack again by force, he might very well get an opportunity to injure him in one blow. Unfortunately, Luo Lang was extremely cautious — he did not act like Qi Ya expected. Qi Ya could not help but curse internally, frustrated at the overly cautious nature of this 1st year cadet.

Luo Lang's manner and actions let Qi Ya know that waiting for Luo Lang to attack first would be fruitless. There were only two paths before Qi Ya — battle Luo Lang in

patience, where the one who lost patience first would attack; or Qi Ya himself could launch an attack now.

Of these two paths, Qi Ya almost unhesitatingly chose the second. This was because he did not want to continue dragging things out with Luo Lang, believing that this way of fighting was an insult to his skills. He believed that finishing off the other cleanly with a KO would reflect his true capabilities better, truly highlighting the dominance of Leiting.

Of course, choosing to initiate the attack was also because that previous clash had given him a clear understanding of the true level of Luo Lang's physical skills. In comparison to him, Luo Lang was obviously much weaker — he should have just entered the early stage of Qi-Jin. For Qi Ya, who exceeded his opponent by three minor levels, defeating the other should be a sure thing. Qi-Jin stage was unlike the stages before it, where the difference between every small level was not that significant, so an upset in those stages was indeed possible. However, at Qi-Jin stage, just the difference of one small level would be enough to completely overpower an opponent.

With this understanding as his support, Qi Ya leapt forward fearlessly, coming right up to Luo Lang in the blink of an eye. A powerful right fist flew at Luo Lang.

Luo Lang saw Qi Ya's attack and heard the sound it made as it cut through the air, and knew that he could not take this attack by force. At this moment, his thin and lanky body displayed a completely different combat style from that of someone with a stouter body. Luo Lang deftly shifted a step, lightly twisting his waist to one side, and the opponent's fist sailed by the left side of his body...

This distance was controlled skilfully, almost calculating the other's attack range with pinpoint precision, resulting in the punch missing him by the barest of distances. Of course, the only thing Luo Lang could not control was that when he had avoided the punch, several strands of hair had not been able to swing away in time, and had actually been sliced off by the power of the wind-force behind the punch. They reluctantly bid farewell to their owner, drifting away wistfully in the air.

A loud 'BOOM' — Qi Ya's punch was heavy, forceful and unstoppable. It crashed into the floor of the stage, emitting a loud sound.

The floor of the stage actually began to crack due to this great force, the cracks spreading out like a web to the outer edges of the stage. Meanwhile, at the point where

the fist had landed, a shallow ditch of about 30 centimetres had appeared.

Taking advantage of the lull, before the opponent could make another move, Luo Lang dashed to the other side of the stage with a quick spring of his feet, once again pulling away from Qi Ya. However, his expression was much more solemn than it had been before. Because he had sensed the power of the opponent's fists at close range, he knew even better now that if he were to be hit accidentally, his body would definitely be unable to take it — he would instantly be injured severely and be forced to withdraw. This was the difference between levels in Qi-Jin. Although the levels did not seem to be that far apart, the disparity in vigour and richness of one's Qi-Jin was like heaven and earth.

The damage to the stage made the freshmen spectating below the stage cry out in shock — was the match about to be stopped here? One strike had caused the stage to be damaged to this degree — how many more blows would this stage be able to take?

The older cadets saw the restlessness of the new cadets, and could not help but sweep disdainful glances at them. At that moment, they had forgotten how they had reacted the exact same way to a similar scene back when they themselves were younger.

Not only were the spectating freshmen stunned, even Qi Long and the others were astounded by this development. They had not imagined the arena stage of the combat hall of the military academy to be so fragile, actually unable to withstand one blow from an early stage peak level Qi-Jin. Li Yingjie was still relatively unbothered, but Wu Jiong and Qi Long began musing to themselves, wondering whether they should hold back some of their strength when it was their turn to prevent the entire stage from crumbling...

Ling Lan saw the stupefied expressions of her companions, and sighed internally. She spoke up to explain, "This is highly advanced simulation technology, able to physically display the strength of a candidate on the stage. Everything will return to normal after 30 seconds."

She had barely finished speaking when the cracks on the stage began to slowly knit back together, becoming whole again in the end. This scene made the new cadets exclaim in wonder once more — who knew the military academy had actually combined simulation technology with the arena stage, allowing a fighter's strength and power to be manifested in this way, providing such visceral stimulus for the spectators.

Seeing this, Qi Long, Wu Jiong, and the others turned their heads to look admiringly at Ling Lan, silently thinking, *'Boss sure enough is Boss. So knowledgeable — nothing can escape his eyes.'*

Ling Lan accepted the idolisation of her companions with a placid face, but internally, she was sweatdropping. Luckily Little Four had given her a heads up in time, otherwise she too would have been one of the clueless horde! Of course, Ling Lan was also grateful for her ice-cube face, unmoving as a rock mountain. It had prevented this fact from being exposed, allowing her to maintain her grand image in her companion's hearts...

Even as Ling Lan was interacting with her group, the fight on the stage continued. Qi Ya tenaciously launched attack after attack at Luo Lang, but they were all dodged by the other. At this moment, Luo Lang was steadfastly obeying Boss Ling Lan's instructions — he did not meet the opponent with force, choosing to weave and dodge and drag things out. Just like this, several exchanges went by... one side erratic like the wind, the other a centred well of power. One light, one heavy, they twisted and turned around the stage, leaving the audience gaping. The one-sided fight they had imagined at the start had never occurred; this fighting style of Luo Lang's would be able to sustain him for very long before he tired.

There began to be some unrest on Leiting's side. Some of the other fighting representatives had expressions of annoyance on their faces, thinking that Qi Ya was performing very shamefully, losing the faces of them seniors.

Qi Ya naturally knew about the commotion below the stage; he was angry and frustrated, but he had no good way of dealing with Luo Lang whose speed was clearly faster than his. The skinny Luo Lang's agility was obviously better than that of the average person. To catch hold of the other, either he had to tire the opponent out, or he had had to make him lose his cool...

Seeing the easy way the other was breathing, Qi Ya knew Luo Lang's energy level was very sufficient. In fact, Qi Ya suspected that this irritable flea would still be jumping around even after he himself ran out of energy. Moreover, Qi Ya had no intentions of waiting any further — he wanted to defeat the other quickly to defend his honour. In that case, he could only make the other lose his composure...

An evil grin turned up the corners of Qi Ya's lips. As he brushed by Luo Lang again, he mocked, "You trash who only knows how to dodge, did you use your body to trade for

the right to be a candidate for this fight?"

Luo Lang's pretty face flushed red as he dodged once more. He controlled the fires of rage in his heart — he knew the other was only saying this to rile him and make him lose his cool. He must not fall for it...

Qi Ya advanced once more, his two fists attacking in an endless stream. Luo Lang weaved left and right, narrowly avoiding getting hit several times by the cutting winds of the opponent's punches. Still, even so, several gashes appeared on Luo Lang's uniform, revealing his exquisite ivory skin.

"As expected, you really have excellent attributes. No wonder your regiment commander was beguiled by you, promoting you without concern for anything else." Qi Ya swept a suggestive glance at the revealed skin.

"Shut up!" Luo Lang screamed. He could tolerate an insult to himself, but he would not allow anyone to insult his Boss Lan!

"Shut up? Why should I? If he can do it, then he should not be afraid of others speaking of it!" From Luo Lang's reaction, Qi Ya could tell what Luo Lang's weakness was. He laughed even more wildly as he said, "I want to tell everyone that your regiment commander is gay, that is, a brokeback <sup>1...</sup>"

Luo Lang's face flushed crimson, his eyes beginning to turn bloodshot in his anger. He continued to dodge, but his body began shaking uncontrollably...

"Haha, I've hit the nail on the head, right?" Qi Ya added venomously, and then his long-prepared right leg whipped out in a side kick...

Everyone thought Luo Lang would dodge when, right at that moment, Luo Lang suddenly froze, his head bowed. Just as Qi Ya's savage side kick was about to strike Luo Lang's body, Luo Lang's left hand reached out and actually grabbed hold of Qi Ya's right ankle.

The spectating Qi Long abruptly stood up, his face paling as he said, "Not good!"

This sudden action made Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie look over in bafflement, but the exclamations of the rest of the audience quickly pulled their attention back to the stage. They assumed Qi Long had reacted that way due to his concern for his companion; only Ling Lan knew what that was about. She tugged at Qi Long and

warned him quietly, "Keep it down!"

Realising where he was at, Qi Long quickly sat down again, but his complexion remained pale and wan. He leaned towards Ling Lan's ear and said softly, "Boss, Luo Lang activated his innate talent." He had not expected Luo Lang to throw caution to the wind and activate his innate talent on the stage. What in the world had the opponent said to anger him so?

Although Qi Ya had spoken very softly, so the spectators had not been able to make out what was said, from the constant movement of his lips, and Luo Lang's increasingly troubled expression, it was certain that he had said something which had provoked Luo Lang. Otherwise, Luo Lang would not have disobeyed Ling Lan's orders and choose to activate his innate talent.

Ling Lan replied levelly, "I know!"

With that statement, Ling Lan's aura became unbelievably cold and forbidding, with even a trace of killing intent seeping out. Fortunately, this air of Ling Lan's came and went in the blink of an eye, so other than the few people near her, no one else sensed anything. On the stage, Tang Yu cast a dubious glance in her direction, but he quickly turned back in bewilderment to the fight on the arena stage.

# Chapter 251

## The 4th Form of One-Inch Punch!

Qi Long sensed the shift in Ling Lan's aura, and could not help but worry for Luo Lang — could it be that Boss had truly become furious because of Luo Lang's disobedience?

Right then, Ling Lan asked Qi Long in a low voice, "Can you tell what personality he managed to activate?"

Ling Lan hoped the personality Luo Lang activated was not one which was brutal, bloodthirsty, and uncontrollable. Otherwise, she would have to forfeit to protect Luo Lang — the military academy would never permit an uncontrollable loose cannon who could not differentiate friend from foe to continue studying at the school and eventually enter an army division.

Qi Long peered closely at Luo Lang and then shook his head, puzzled. "Strange. This personality has never appeared before. I cannot sense any intense malicious intent, but my innate talent is warning me that I must be careful."

Ling Lan frowned at his words. She carefully studied Luo Lang's expression — there was no sign of bloodthirst, nor was there any sort of extreme ruthlessness. The current Luo Lang just seemed endlessly cold, but this coldness did not encompass everyone, merely directed solely at his opponent.

Weighing things in her mind, Ling Lan decided and said, "Let's continue watching."

Ling Lan too wanted to know what personality this was that Luo Lang had activated. As long as Luo Lang did not lose control, Ling Lan did not want to cut the match short. This was because she knew that, since Luo Lang had thrown caution to the wind to activate his innate talent, he must really not want to lose to this opponent who had insulted him. As their boss, Ling Lan wanted to help Luo Lang achieve what he wanted to do.

Seated beside them, Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie did not know the struggles of Qi Long and Ling Lan. Right now, their attention was fully absorbed by the stage. They had even stood up in their excitement, as Luo Lang had currently taken full control of the scene.

With one hand, Luo Lang gripped Qi Ya's ankle. All the spectators knew that the power behind that kick was extremely formidable — handling it with one hand must definitely be challenging. However, Luo Lang seemed to do so easily — he did not even take a single step back due to the opponent's strength, appearing cool and unruffled.

Luo Lang could be seen to slowly lift his head. The red flush on his face from before was gone and his complexion had already regained its usual fairness, becoming unbelievably cool. Both his irises were a deep black, like pools of dead water, so deep and unfathomable that Qi Ya, being pinned by them in close range, felt a chill permeate his heart.

"I've told you before, to shut up," said Luo Lang calmly, "What a shame you would not listen..." As he spoke, Luo Lang raised his right hand and swept it in a fierce chop down at the opponent's shank <sup>1</sup> gripped in his other hand. Based off the speed and force that he was applying, if the strike connected, the bones of the shank would certainly break.

Qi Ya's pupils shrunk in fear, the warning bells in his mind ringing — he shook his right leg desperately, trying to regain the freedom of his leg. But Luo Lang's left hand was like a vise; he could not struggle free anytime soon.

Qi Ya naturally would not just do nothing and resign himself to his fate — he sprang up from the ground with his other foot, and executing a half-flip in the air, he swung his left leg, which had initially been supporting his weight, out in a fierce kick towards the side of Luo Lang's neck.

In order to protect his right shank, Qi Ya was revealing the brutal side of his nature. He no longer held back, beginning to target Luo Lang's vital points.

Everyone exclaimed in shock at the sight, sucking in a cold breath. Quite a few freshmen even stood up in horror, concerned for Luo Lang on the stage. If the opponent's kick landed, Luo Lang's fragile neck area would certainly be snapped, killing him instantly. There would be no chance at all for rescue and recovery. In an arena battle within the military academy, these vital points were off-limits. Without question, Qi Ya had broken the academy rules.

Seeing this, a cold gleam flashed through Tang Yu's eyes. He was just about to take action, when he saw Luo Lang calmly change the attack trajectory of his right hand, to directly meet the other's kick. Thus, Tang Yu paused, but he still made preparations to act. However, right then, Colonel Tang Yu had drawn a huge 'X' in his heart over Qi Ya



— this kind of person who would be so ruthless against a comrade, he would never give him a chance to go to those elite ace military troops...

With an audible 'pow', Luo Lang's palm struck the opponent's other ankle, and Qi Ya felt a snap. Following that, an intense pain radiated from Qi Ya's foot to his heart, and he could not help but yell, "Argh!"

The collision of the two forces naturally produced a tremendous rebound force. Qi Ya was thrown back forcefully, and due to the intense pain he was in, he actually did not manage to land soundly. His entire body was flung out to crash heavily onto the stage, where he then slid across the ground, leaving a faint mark in his trail.

Meanwhile, Luo Lang had to take several steps back before finding his footing. However, his right hand hung limply by his side. From the swinging motion it was making, it was clear to see that Luo Lang's right hand had most likely been broken by the rebound force in meeting the other's kick earlier.

Looking at Qi Ya cradling his ankle on the ground, his expression a rictus of pain, and contrasting it with Luo Lang on the other side, who also had a broken bone, but sported a cold and unfeeling expression... it was clear to see which was superior. The freshmen were naturally unconditionally on Luo Lang's side, while some of the seniors could not help but frown as well at this time. They looked down on Qi Ya for losing the face of the seniors, and silent admiration for Luo Lang began to grow in their minds. This delicate looking youth was actually a tough character.

Colonel Tang Yu walked over to Qi Ya's side expressionlessly and asked, "Cadet Qi Ya, can you still fight? If you cannot, I will announce the victor for this match."

Both sides were similarly injured, but it never even crossed Colonel Tang Yu's mind to ask this question of Luo Lang. This was because he believed that, as long as that fellow Luo Lang had breath left in his lungs, he would definitely continue fighting. This was how a qualified military man should behave. Compared to Luo Lang, this 5th year Qi Ya was just too much of a wimp.

Qi Ya felt as if there was a drill boring into his right ankle — the pain was truly unbearable. Without saying a word, Qi Ya knew the other must have applied some hidden move on his ankle, and the hate for Luo Lang in his heart just grew even more. Right then, hearing the referee Tang Yu ask this, how could he voluntarily admit defeat? Holding back the pain, he replied, "I can fight!"

That said, Qi Ya slowly climbed off the ground. This scene was greeted by the applause of the spectating students. Even though Qi Ya had truly performed terribly before this, at this very moment, he was undoubtedly acting as a qualified cadet should; this gained him the acknowledgement of a portion of the students.

At this scene, Qi Long could not help but snicker softly. He said quietly to Ling Lan, "Boss, looks like that punk Luo Lang has secretly used a mean move." He stroked his jaw and wondered, "Which move did he use? The 3rd form of One-Inch Punch?"

Ling Lan instantly responded, "No, it's the 4th form."

"Huh? When has there been such a move?" Qi Long was stupefied. How did he not know about this?

"The One-Inch Punch is the Luo family's ultimate arts. Of course it'll have some ace in the holes," answered Ling Lan.

The instructors within the learning space had already developed the One-Inch Punch up till the 9th form. Ling Lan's team had already mastered all the forms up to the 3rd form, but since the One-Inch Punch series had originated from the inherited ultimate arts of Luo Lang's family, Ling Lan had specially taught the 4th form to Luo Lang. This was to prove that the One-Inch Punch was still the Luo family's ultimate arts, so Luo Lang would forever have an extra ace in the hole than the others.

After listening to Ling Lan's explanation, Qi Long found it made sense, and so no longer concerned himself about the issue. This was Qi Long's strength — always knowing where to draw the line, never demanding things that did not belong to him.

On the stage, Qi Ya, who was back on his feet, glared hatefully at Luo Lang. He knew that his performance had disgraced him in front of everyone here, and all of this had been caused by this hateful youth before him. He was raging internally, wishing that he could kill Luo Lang to release the pent up anger and hate in his heart.

Luo Lang's eyes met Qi Ya's, and the remote disinterest in Luo Lang's gaze sent a chill through Qi Ya. His mind, which had been consumed with rage, was suddenly shocked into wakefulness — because he had sensed a kind of danger. In fact, he could even sense a slight trace of killing intent from the other... could it be the other also wanted to kill him?

How could this be? Qi Ya shook his head emphatically, casting this thought aside. He

hadn't done anything, so how could the other have killing intent against him? Right then, Qi Ya had forgotten those words he had said earlier. He did not know that — some things, some people, just could not be sullied.

Seeing the two face off once more, Tang Yu announced, "The match continues!"

No sooner had he finished speaking when Luo Lang moved. He dashed out like a ferocious tiger, flying over to Qi Ya's side. Since the other could not move properly, when should he attack if not now?

Just as Luo Lang expected, one foot short, Qi Ya could not dodge; he could only meet Luo Lang's attack head on. Of course, Qi Ya was not afraid — in fact, he was rather gleeful. He had wanted to fight Luo Lang head on from the start. With regards to internal energy <sup>2</sup>, his was undoubtedly more substantial than Luo Lang's. Fighting on that front, he had full confidence to injure Luo Lang and obtain the final victory.

However, were things really going to turn out as he expected?

When the two of them exchanged the first blow, Qi Ya's expression changed dramatically. He found that the other's attack power was no weaker than his — his original anticipated plan of using internal energy to injure the other had no way of being realised.

The second move, the third move, the fourth move... slowly, Qi Ya realised that every time his arms blocked the other's attack, the spot he blocked with would ache in pain. This pain was extremely similar to that of where his ankle was broken, just not as intense. For the first and second move, he had not sensed much of it, but after the third and fourth moves, the pain began to intensify, and by the time they reached the seventh and eighth move, he was actually unable to raise his arms properly...

A 'bam' rang out. Luo Lang had grasped the opening and struck Qi Ya's cheek forcefully, and Qi Ya was sent flying. Luo Lang had held back on this strike, not using the forms of One-Inch Punch, but even so, Qi Ya was knocked unconscious instantly by Luo Lang's base strength. He crashed onto the ground and did not get up again.

Colonel Tang Yu quickly rushed forwards to check on Qi Ya's condition. Seeing that the youth had no life-threatening injuries, and was indeed out for the count, he indicated for the staff in the combat hall to send Qi Ya to the treatment centre. With the present technology, as long as it was not a fatal injury, any patient who was still breathing

could basically be saved.

Qi Ya was seen to be lifted off the stage, and Tang Yu then smiled and announced loudly, "The first match, 1st year Luo Lang of the New Cadet Regiment wins!"

The faces of the people from Leiting were currently a sheet of darkness. It was unexpected that Qi Ya, who they had had high hopes for, would actually be defeated in an upset by a frail-looking 1st year. The opponent had taken a match right from the start, and more frighteningly, the one they had defeated was their third strongest. Quite a few members of Leiting began to reconsider — could they really win this fight against the New Cadet Regiment? For the first time, they began to harbour doubts.

Lin Zhidong gritted his teeth and said, "It's no matter. I suppose the other side had sent one of their strongest. As long as we win the rest of the matches, losing one match won't affect the final outcome."

A man beside him said evenly, "The key is the fight order. If the opponent just happens to use their strongest few against our weakest..."

This was not like a transparent private fight, where fights were arranged according to personal strength — a blind fight not only tested a fighter's true strength, but also tested the psychological tactics and strategy of each side. Perhaps it could be called luck, but this was the mode the official challenges used, all in hopes of seeing more diverse matchups. Compared to an open fight, a blind fight was undoubtedly much fairer — if one applied the correct strategy, and had a great burst of luck, even the weak had hopes of winning.

These words made Lin Zhidong fall into silent contemplation. His gaze wavered slightly, but quickly settled. He did not believe that their luck would be so horrible that the opponent would manage to grab hold of those two opportunities so precisely.

Luo Lang slowly walked off the stage, and he was welcomed back by the respectful gazes of the members of the New Cadet Regiment. As there were quite a few non-Central Academy freshmen within their ranks, those students had indeed been somewhat doubtful at Luo Lang's inclusion as one of the five representatives. However, this fight had proven that Luo Lang truly had the skill to be one of the five top fighters of the New Cadet Regiment. There was no longer anyone within the New Cadet Regiment who doubted his strength now.

Seeing Luo Lang's impressive performance, the man in the box who had already become interested in Luo Lang licked his lips excitedly, chuckling deeply as he said, "What a prideful and spirited little fellow. If I break those proud bones of his bit by bit, wouldn't his expression be very interesting? <sup>3</sup> Muahahahaha... <sup>4</sup> " Gruesome laughter rang out to fill the entire box, involuntarily causing one's skin to crawl.



Luo Lang slowly walked to stand before Ling Lan, where he then stared coldly at her. Facing this strange situation, Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie, who had initially planned to step forward and congratulate Luo Lang, stopped moving instantly. They stared uncertainly at the two people in front of them.

Ling Lan remained seated, unmoved, as she stared back evenly at Luo Lang. The cold air around her body became much denser.

Luo Lang opened and shut his mouth, but emitted no sound. Ling Lan coldly rebuked, "Still not letting go?" That said, Ling Lan's eyes gleamed with a cold light, piercing Luo Lang with its intensity — as if receiving some heavy blow, Luo Lang's body swayed, and then his eyes closed and he began falling towards the ground.

Qi Long reacted quickly, catching Luo Lang and pulling him into his arms. At first chance, he examined Luo Lang's arms, and then, face paling, he shouted, "Boss, there are multiple breaks on the bones of Luo Lang's arms!"

"I know. Let the staff arrange for Luo Lang to go to the treatment centre, accompanied by Lin Zhong-qing," Ling Lan swiftly ordered.

This punk — using the 4th form of One-Inch Punch multiple times when he had yet to master it, forcefully increasing the level of his internal energy... unable to fully control the form's power, of course his own arms would have been broken by the rebound force of the One-Inch Punch. Still, the tolerance level of that alter ego of his was truly off the charts, and he was tough towards himself as well, actually tolerating the pain of both broken arms until he could finally defeat Qi Ya...

When Tang Yu found out that Luo Lang had been fighting while tolerating the pain of broken arms, waiting till he won and returned to his teammates' side before allowing himself to collapse, he was even more delighted with this strong and determined youth. He had already made up his mind that, even if Luo Lang's body did not meet

expectations in the end, he would still use his own special rights to take in the other as his disciple.

Once Luo Lang had been sent off to the treatment centre, Ling Lan, noticing the confusion in Wu Jiong's and Li Yingjie's eyes, spoke up to explain, "Just now, the opponent had insulted Luo Lang, saying that he had only been chosen as a representative because he belongs to me."

The two stared blankly back, not understanding the meaning behind the words right away. Qi Long understood however, because Ling Lan had already mentioned it to him previously when she had explained why Luo Lang had become enraged enough to activate his innate talent. Thus, he pulled the two aside and quietly spelled things out for them <sup>5</sup>.

## Chapter 252

### Fatal Weakness!

Wu Jiong's and Li Yingjie's facial expressions soured and they turned to spit fiercely at the ground, glaring furiously at the area where the Leiting representatives were. Those words of Qi Ya's not only insulted Luo Lang and Ling Lan, they also insulted every single person in the New Cadet Regiment at the same time. This made the boys livid.

As classmates who had grown up alongside Ling Lan, Luo Lang, and the others of their team, Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie naturally knew the nature of the close relationship among the members of Ling Lan's team. It was absolutely the purest of brotherly bonds. From the 1st grade at the scout academy, Ling Lan, who had already been more mature than any of them, had watched over and cared for his team members like an elder brother, treating them like his own younger brothers. In fact, they were very envious of the rapport between Ling Lan and the other members of his team, which was so good that, at times, they could understand each other with just one look. They just could not imagine how someone could sully the pure relationship between the two by casting such aspersions.

Li Yingjie had always been a straightforward person who spoke without filtering his words. He grumbled discontentedly, "Saying Boss Lan and Luo Lang have this kind of relationship, he might as well say it's Qi Long and Luo Lang. Those two have always hung around each other since young, sparring and fighting with one another. Haven't they spent even more time together?"

These words made Qi Long hook his arm around Li Yingjie's neck in indignation, where he then pressed his fist forcefully against the other's head. This made Li Yingjie squawk in pain, but with his fighting strength being no match for Qi Long's, he had no way of escaping Qi Long's violent hands. He could only apologise repeatedly until Qi Long finally let him go. Of course Qi Long would be annoyed! How could such a big stalwart man like him like guys <sup>1</sup>... In comparison, Qi Long still preferred those curvaceous bodies of pretty younger sisters <sup>2</sup>.

Right at that moment, Little Four once more informed Ling Lan of the submission of

the opponent's candidate name. This time, they had chosen their 4th strongest fighter, Song Lianlu.

Ling Lan very quickly realised the reasoning behind this arrangement of the opponent. Qi Ya, who they had had high hopes for, had been defeated; this made Leiting have no choice but to be cautious. They were afraid that if they sent out the weakest among their line-up, and he met a strong opponent, they would lose one more match. However, they also did not want to send their two strongest out, as that would leave them with no one to hold the fort. Thus, after some deliberation, they had sent out the safest option, the 4th strongest, to attempt to take this match.

Ling Lan turned her head to look at Qi Long and the others. Just as she was about to tell Qi Long to get ready, Li Yingjie stepped forward and volunteered, "Boss Lan, I'll go up for this match."

Ling Lan felt her gums ache as she held back the words she had been about to say. Like Luo Lang, Li Yingjie was also at first level early stage Qi-Jin. Against an opponent of top-level early stage Qi-Jin, he had almost no chance of winning, unless Li Yingjie also had that kind of inexplicable, mysterious, and unpredictable innate talent like Luo Lang's. Then, there might still have been the possibility of an upset.

Seeing Boss Lan staring at him with a frigid expression, Li Yingjie clenched his fists nervously. Although he knew volunteering on his own to fight was rather reckless of him, very likely to affect Boss Lan's strategic arrangements, he just did not want to lose to Luo Lang. At the same time, he also wanted to prove that he was not a coward. Earlier on the stage, his involuntary shudder had caused Luo Lang to mistake him for one, and he was still stewing over it. Thus, having seen Luo Lang win the first match after great difficulty, Li Yingjie did not want to fall behind Luo Lang by too much.

The fighting spirit in Li Yingjie's eyes made Ling Lan change her mind instantly. She nodded and said, "Alright. Don't disgrace our New Cadet Regiment."

The reason why Ling Lan had changed her mind at the last moment was that Luo Lang had unexpectedly won his match. Therefore, even if Li Yingjie lost this next match, it would not affect the bigger picture. After all, there was still the weakest fighter in the opponent's line-up who, barring any unexpected incidents, should lose whether Wu Jiong or Qi Long went up against him. And so, Ling Lan agreed to Li Yingjie's plea to fight now.



As long as it would not affect the final outcome, Ling Lan was willing to go along with these little fellows' wishes.

Obtaining Ling Lan's approval, Li Yingjie's eyes shone with a trace of pleasant surprise. He had originally thought Boss Lan did not like him very much — after all, he had indeed been rather annoying in the past. But just now, there was no dislike or apathy in Ling Lan's eyes; his demeanour had been extremely serious. In that moment, Li Yingjie fully felt the trust that Ling Lan had in him.

For some reason, he suddenly recalled his second eldest cousin brother Li Shiyu's words to him, *"When you finally learn what brotherly bonds mean, then you will understand that power is not something irreplaceable."*

At this moment, Li Yingjie seemed to vaguely understand what his second cousin brother had been saying. He looked towards Ling Lan — if it were Ling Lan, Li Yingjie probably would not fight with him over the position of regiment commander...

On the stage, Colonel Tang Yu had already received the name list from both sides. The moment time was up, he announced, "The New Cadet Regiment vs Leiting Mecha Clan, 2nd round. 1st year Li Yingjie against 4th year Song Lianlu!"



Inside the box, Yun Xiu heard this announcement and his spirits rallied. He quickly turned to yell, "Shiyu, your younger cousin brother is up now. His opponent is Song Lianlu from our year."

Li Shiyu, who was resting with his eyes closed on the sofa, abruptly opened his eyes. Seeing Li Yingjie strut confidently onto the stage, his brow furrowed. "Song Lianlu is already a Qi-Jin master, Li Yingjie is most probably no match for him." No matter how much he said he looked down on Li Yingjie, Li Shiyu could not help but worry for him right then.

Yun Xiu had an opposing opinion. "Not necessarily. That weak-looking youth earlier managed to defeat the Qi-Jin stage Qi Ya after all. I think this year of freshmen aren't as weak as we think them to be... perhaps your cousin is also already in Qi-Jin."

Li Shiyu was silent for a moment, and then said faintly, "I hope it turns out that way... still, if he loses, I will let him understand the consequences of losing." Since he and his

eldest cousin brother could not become the family head of the Li family, he hoped that Li Yingjie, who would become the family head in the end, would be even stronger. Even if he could not get used to the Li family's heartlessness, having been taught all this time to take pride in the Li family, Li Shiyu still did not want to see the Li family decline.



Seeing that both sides were ready to fight, Colonel Tang Yu waved his right hand and shouted, "Begin!"

Following this sound, the two fighters faced each other from a distance, not attacking right off the bat. Qi Ya's loss had made Song Lianlu become exceedingly cautious. He did not know whether his opponent was strong or weak, so, he was prepared to observe the situation for a bit before making a decision.

Meanwhile, Li Yingjie had received instruction from Ling Lan as well before getting onto the stage. Like with Luo Lang, because he had just entered Qi-Jin stage and his Qi-Jin had yet to settle, it was not wise for him to fight head-on with his opponent. Thus, his strategy would still focus on drawing things out. Of course, the situation on the stage would be constantly shifting, so everything would still depend on Li Yingjie's judgment.

Although Li Yingjie was an arrogant punk, he was not an impulsive one. His combat intelligence was still pretty good, otherwise he would not have remained securely within the top 5 for ten years. Therefore, he chose the same path as Song Lianlu. The two of them faced each other from a distance, circling the stage as they looked for a chance to attack.

This was distinctly different from Luo Lang and Qi Ya's direct confrontation — the two fighters in this fight circled the stage for a whole 3 minutes without acting. This dull scenario made the spectating students lose their patience, some of them even outright beginning to yawn. Quite a few people began discussing among themselves, wondering how many minutes more they would spend dancing around each other...

Right then, the initially still circling Song Lianlu suddenly rocked on the balls of his feet, and then his entire body shot forward like an arrow. In the blink of an eye, he was in front of Li Yingjie, his right fist striking out fiercely at Li Yingjie's left side. Just before, a weakness had suddenly appeared in Li Yingjie's defence.

Song Lianlu knew that this could also be a lure, but he also knew that if he did not try and attack now, even if they continued to weave around one another for half a day, he still might not find a better chance to attack. Thus, Song Lianlu decided to make his move.

However, as Song Lianlu attacked, he found that the weakness had disappeared. In its place, was Li Yingjie's long ready clawed hands. This was the Li family's ultimate arts — the strongest offensive defensive measure to handle an opponent's attacks.

Seeing this, Ling Lan's brow furrowed, knowing that Li Yingjie was likely to come to grief. This lure-and-counterattack tactic of Li Yingjie's was actually not wrong — his mistake was in underestimating his opponent's capabilities. If he had used this move against an opponent of equal level, Li Yingjie would absolutely have had the upper hand, but now, things were not so certain.

Sure enough, Li Yingjie's grasping hands locked onto the opponent's right fist, but the moment they connected, Li Yingjie felt a strong surge of energy coming from the opponent's fist, almost repelling his grab off in its intensity.

Li Yingjie knew that if the other repelled his grab, he would certainly take a heavy blow from the other in return. He would definitely be injured, and may have to declare his loss in advance... he did not want Luo Lang to taunt him. So, gritting his teeth, he tolerated the intense pain radiating up his arm, tenaciously keeping his hold on the other's right fist...

Song Lianlu felt that he was about to shake his opponent's palm off, but just as he was about to succeed, the other retained the hold on his right fist and then he felt a pull. He felt the strength of his entire body being pulled to an empty spot, and he careened uncontrollably to crash into the shielded area on the edges of the arena...

The shielded area emitted a blinding light — a pattern like the shattering of glass appearing within the light. In the meantime, after drawing the opponent's strength to one side, Li Yingjie's readied right fist struck out immediately towards Song Lianlu's chest.

Defence was just a prelude to attacking — the final objective of Li Yingjie's move was here...

However, Song Lianlu reacted equally swiftly. His left palm moved to block his chest at

the critical moment, forcibly receiving this unexpected attack by Li Yingjie!

With a 'pow', fist met palm, and then, with a loud crack, the two were sent flying backwards. Song Lianlu had to take a whole 3 steps back after landing to find his footing, while Li Yingjie also had to take 3 steps back before standing firmly. From the spectating students' perspective, the two fighters had battled to a draw.

Only those with a keen eye had noticed that Li Yingjie's low-hanging left hand was trembling minutely beyond his control. That powerful attack of the opponent he had grabbed hold of previously had clearly damaged Li Yingjie's left hand severely.

Wu Jiong and Qi Long could tell, and their expressions paled. Wu Jiong said worriedly, "Li Yingjie's left hand is injured. It'll be tough from this point on."

Ling Lan said calmly, "This match, Li Yingjie was at a disadvantage from the start. That's why winning or losing isn't so important. I just wanted to see how far he could go."

Li Yingjie had a fatal weakness — when he knew he was at a disadvantage, that he was no match for his opponent, he would very easily give up on himself. His character lacked some tenacity. This was also why he had lost to Luo Lang so many times all this while, ending up in 5th place, slightly behind Luo Lang in the rankings.

This was what Ling Lan was thinking. Since Li Yingjie had sincerely acknowledged her as boss, she was inclined to help Li Yingjie solve this problem. Today was a good opportunity — it was rare for Li Yingjie to have such an intense desire to fight...

# Chapter 253

## Stand Up!

Suppressing the intense pain coming from his left hand, Li Yingjie looked at the confident Song Lianlu across from him, and his heart sank. That last move had let him know just how wide the gap was between his strength and the opponent's. Under these circumstances, how could he beat the other? Li Yingjie's gaze began to waver with uncertainty...

Song Lianlu had similarly sensed the power behind Li Yingjie's attack. Despite his hastiness in blocking it, he had still managed to take it. It looked like the strength of this cocky punk in front of him was indeed weaker than him by a strand. With this, he had some basis for confidence now. His initial caution and tentative approach vanished, to be replaced by a raging barrage of attacks.

Facing this sudden attack, Li Yingjie naturally did not choose to take it forcefully. He instantly retreated to evade — it should be said that though Li Yingjie's evasion ability was not as elegant as Luo Lang's, it was still extremely remarkable, nimbly dodging all of Song Lianlu's fierce attacks. Still, even so, Li Yingjie was already disadvantaged, clearly being a passive receptor of Song Lianlu's attacks.

Just like that, one attacked fiercely without any reservations, while the other dodged narrowly again and again. Everyone could tell that the loss of the New Cadet Regiment's representative was just a matter of time. Unless this freshman managed to pull out some ultimate move and have a sudden explosion of strength like the previous freshman, the outcome of this match would not change.

Of course, they would not jump to a conclusion so quickly... after all, before the final results were out, anything was possible. Thus, everyone watched the stage intently, waiting for the results to emerge. Either this freshman would be on the defensive right until he gets defeated, or, like in the previous round, he would suddenly explode and launch a counterattack from dire straits.

Below the stage, the spectating Wu Jiong and Qi Long's faces were growing darker and darker. They knew that, if things continued like this, Li Yingjie would definitely lose! It was not that they could not accept failure, but they did not want to see Li Yingjie being pummelled continuously in such a frustrating manner. In their minds, even if they lost, they must lose gloriously!

Ling Lan frowned. Li Yingjie's old problem had appeared again. The moment he met an opponent he could not beat, he would become unmotivated and defend passively, having no courage at all to risk everything in a last-ditch struggle.

Ling Lan began to think back — when had Li Yingjie begun to have this issue? As Ling Lan had not paid much attention to Li Yingjie in the past, by the time she had noticed, this fellow had already had this problem. Of course, Ling Lan was not a saintly matron. She would not go and help this irritating punk the way he was back then even when she noticed. Therefore, this problem had lasted all this while until today.

Sensing his boss's confusion, Little Four could not help but roll his eyes. Without saying a word, he pulled out several video clips he had recorded in the early days, projecting them within Ling Lan's mindspace...

The first video was of Ling Lan's first fight against Li Yingjie. Without even sparing the other a glance, Ling Lan had sent Li Yingjie flying with one punch... At the end of the video, Li Yingjie's disgruntled and resentful gaze was clearly captured within the frame.

The second video was Ling Lan's second fight against Li Yingjie. Again, she had not even looked at him, sending him flying with one kick... Li Yingjie's expression at this time was one of dejection, with even a touch of self-doubt.

The third video was similarly a fight between Ling Lan and Li Yingjie. Ling Lan once again casually sent Li Yingjie flying with one punch... Li Yingjie's expression here now was somewhat wooden, and a light trace of self-contempt could be read from his lips.

The fourth video was still a fight between Ling Lan and Li Yingjie. This time, Ling Lan just happened to be in the period when her killing intent had been the densest. Regardless of how Little Four tried to cover it up, some had still leaked when she had fought, instantly smashing through Li Yingjie's mental defences. That time, Li Yingjie

did not even manage to do anything before being sent flying off the stage by a punch from Ling Lan... back then, his gaze was filled with terror...

From then onwards, whenever Li Yingjie encountered someone stronger than him, he no longer had the courage to try and fight it out...

Ling Lan rubbed her forehead wearily. *"Little Four, you mean that, Li Yingjie's current condition is completely because of me?"*

Little Four nodded firmly. *"Of course. The first few defeats had already made that fellow's heart become unbelievably weak. That fourth time, was coincidentally when your killing intent was at its worst. His spirit received a terrible blow by that killing intent you leaked, leaving him with an inner demon."*

*"Tsk, why is this fellow's heart so d\*mn weak? Isn't he very arrogant and proud?"* Ling Lan was somewhat baffled by this. Qi Long had been constantly losing to her as well, and she did not see any openings open up in that brat's mental state to produce an inner demon. He still fought as roughly as before.

*"How could it be the same? Qi Long respects you, Boss. In his heart, Boss is not only Boss, but also a Master. Losing to you is very normal for him. But it's different for Li Yingjie. He has always considered you, Boss, as a rival, desiring to beat you so much that he was almost crazed by it. But Boss just happened to be too strong and overwhelming. Losing again and again, losing until he had no more confidence, and then his already fragile heart was coincidentally invaded by Boss's killing intent, hence leading to this problem....."*

Little Four's explanation made Ling Lan somewhat depressed. She had never thought that Li Yingjie would end up following her in the end, making this problem an issue she had to handle. If she had only known earlier, she would have been more merciful back then <sup>1</sup>. However, it was too late for all that now — she might as well put her energy into thinking about how she could resolve the psychological problem this brat had now.

Right then, a powerful sound of fist meeting flesh rang out, "Pow!"

On the stage, Song Lianlu had finally grasped a chance to land a heavy punch onto Li Yingjie's left shoulder. Li Yingjie was sent flying to crash heavily onto the stage. He slid several metres, leaving an extremely obvious line on the stage; it was clear to see how

powerful the opponent's blow had been.

Li Yingjie could not stop himself from throwing up a mouthful of blood. Although his vital points had not been hit directly, the opponent's strength had still been strong enough to cause blast injury to his internal organs. He felt a profound ache in his chest cavity, and even worse, his entire left arm had lost all sensation. Who knew if that last punch had shattered the bones of his shoulder, or if it had damaged his nervous system...

Song Lianlu saw the opponent struck down and pleasant surprise flashed through his eyes. Just as he wanted to follow through to determine the outcome, Colonel Tang Yu suddenly stopped him and indicated for him to stand to one side. Then, Colonel Tang Yu walked up to Li Yingjie's side and asked, "Do you choose to admit defeat or continue to fight?"

When Li Yingjie heard Colonel Tang Yu's question, a voice rang out in his heart, *'Li Yingjie, admit defeat quickly! The opponent's strength is so much higher than yours. You have no way of beating him. There's no point in persisting. You might as well admit defeat and suffer less.'*

Yes, why did he have to hold on so hard and fight? He was weaker than the opponent to begin with... wasn't it normal to lose?

Li Yingjie slowly raised his hand, prepared to say the words 'I admit defeat', when a cold voice rang out from behind him, "Li Yingjie, stand up!"

Li Yingjie turned his head in bewilderment and saw Ling Lan, who had initially been seated below the stage, now standing right by the edge of the arena stage, looking at him with an icy expression.

"Li Yingjie, where have the guts you had when you were younger gone to? Godd\*mmit, stand up! It's time to let them see what the real cocky Li Yingjie is like." Ling Lan's gaze was clearly frigid, but for some reason Li Yingjie could see the same firm faith in him as before in his gaze...

*'He understands me, and is also willing to believe in me, which was why he had agreed to my request...'* Li Yingjie did not forget that, before the round, Ling Lan's gaze had been on Qi Long, but he had still agreed to his volunteering in the end. Not perfunctorily, but with full faith in him, believing that he would put up a good fight.



*'No, I cannot let him look down on me!' Li Yingjie was shaken. A voice in his heart was raging — yes, I'm cocky and arrogant. I was not afraid of anything at the beginning. Even if someone was stronger than me, I would dare to challenge them... admit defeat? When had this phrase appeared in my mouth? That's definitely not me.*

Li Yingjie abruptly turned his head around. His initially slightly raised right hand changed directions to slam onto the ground and support him as he slowly pushed himself off the ground. In spite of the agony, there was no change in Li Yingjie's face at this moment, as if the wounds on his body did not exist.

Seeing Li Yingjie's movements, Ling Lan turned around with satisfaction, returning to her seat. She believed that, this time, Li Yingjie was different now.

Li Yingjie stood up straight, and turning to the waiting Colonel Tang Yu, he said, "I want to continue fighting!"

A trace of approval flashed through Colonel Tang Yu's eyes, and he nodded and said, "Alright, the match continues!"

Song Lianlu silently tsked. If Colonel Tang Yu had not stopped him, he could have taken the chance to beat the other until he had no more fight in him. At the heart of it, this punk had been saved by the referee.

However, this would be the only time! A subtle smile appeared on the corners of Song Lianlu's lips. This half-crippled punk before him was completely no match for him.



"Who was the one who yelled earlier?" In the Leiting area below the stage, Lin Zhidong frowned as he looked at Ling Lan walking back to her seat, and asked the people around him.

"I don't know. This person is very unfamiliar." The person beside him looked closely at Ling Lan, and found her face unfamiliar, and so shook his head. As Ling Lan had always stayed within the villa without going out, other than those people from the Doha academies, most of the major factions outside really did not know about her.

"This person needs to be watched." Lin Zhidong was extremely alert. Being able to rekindle a comrade's fighting spirit with just a few words, this person could not be

simple.

"Yes, Vice Regiment Commander Lin, I will arrange it," answered the person beside him respectfully, silently memorising Ling Lan's name.

"Qi Long, Li Yingjie's aura seems to have changed," said Wu Jiong to Qi Long excitedly. Li Yingjie's transformation on the stage had also been sensed by Wu Jiong.

Qi Long let out a sigh of relief as well and replied, "Yes, we don't have to worry about him anymore." He then sighed and added, "Boss Lan is truly Boss Lan, able to change Li Yingjie with just one sentence."

These words received Wu Jiong's agreement. He glanced admiringly at the calm and cold-faced Ling Lan by their sides. Only a talent such as Ling Lan, who could discern a person's nature with one look, would be able to unearth the latent talents of everyone in their team, better leading them as they advanced further. On this point, Wu Jiong was really too far away from Ling Lan's level.

Once again, Wu Jiong felt the distance between he and Ling Lan keenly. This sort of respect and admiration accumulated bit by bit in Wu Jiong's heart, until it was so substantial that it could not be overturned. He could only continue to willingly chase after the other, until the end of time!

# Chapter 254

## I'm Proud of You!

The sudden shift in Li Yingjie's aura startled Song Lianlu. His attacking speed slowed reflexively, giving Li Yingjie time to swiftly pull away to face Song Lianlu from a distance once more.

Seeing this, a slight smile appeared on Colonel Tang Yu's face. This representative of the New Cadet Regiment was still not too bad. Although he did not perform well at the start, he had still adapted in the end — only a child like this was worthy of being Luo Lang's teammate... Colonel Tang Yu's heart had unknowingly begun to lean towards the New Cadet Regiment.

Li Yingjie glared at Song Lianlu. At this moment, he only wanted to rip off a chunk of flesh from the opponent's body somehow, exactly like a savage wolf cub, prepared for its final struggle.

Li Yingjie's fierce gaze made Song Lianlu's heart clench. His expression became grim — even if he was confident in his victory, he did not dare to move recklessly right then.

Seeing the opponent suddenly become hesitant and cautious, Li Yingjie's lips curled into a self-mocking smirk. It turned out that when he himself was resolute, the opponent's aura would also shift in response. Many of his previous inexplicable defeats had truly been his own fault.

Li Yingjie self-mocking smile lasted only for a brief moment before he once again reverted to his typical arrogant and haughty demeanour. The appearance of this expression actually made his initially handsome face rather irritating to look at — apparently changes in mental state would affect one's external appearance. This was also why Li Yingjie had not been very popular in the Central Scout Academy despite being a handsome little fellow.

Still, the attention of the spectating students was not on Li Yingjie's annoying face. Instead, their gazes were drawn to an extremely unique motion he made.

Li Yingjie's remaining mobile right hand was raised slightly forwards, his fingers

molded into a strange form... like a hook but not a hook, like a fist but not a fist. But for some reason, the moment this form appeared, everyone found their attention involuntarily drawn to it.



"Ah, what move is this?" Seeing this atypical stance, inside the box, Yun Xiu could not help but turn to ask his good friend Li Shiyu in surprise.

"This brat is actually using this move now." Li Shiyu's expression instantly gentled. Earlier, when Li Yingjie was being beaten like a stray dog, his face had been thunderous and unsightly.

"You know?" Yun Xiu stared with starry eyes at Li Shiyu, his face filled with anticipation to hear his best friend's explanation.

This cute moe puppy-dog look made a small smile appear on Li Shiyu's lips, his mood turning for the better instantly. He said, "This is my family's exclusive killing art. Choosing to use it here, it looks like this fellow is prepared for a final plunge."

At this explanation, Yun Xiu turned to look wide-eyed at the screen, excited to see what would happen next.



Seeing the opponent's strange actions, without even thinking about it, Song Lianlu knew the other was about to do something major. However, he was not like that moron Qi Ya, only wanting to save face and reacting with brute force. As long as the final victory was his, he did not mind if the process was unsightly, or if it was dull and uninteresting.

Thus, Song Lianlu was extremely patient. He chose to continue waiting, waiting for this surging aura of Li Yingjie's to pass. He believed that, having been heavily injured, Li Yingjie would not be able to hold out for too long. This rallied strength of his would certainly pass, and that moment would be Song Lianlu's time to attack.

The scene once more descended into the ennui of the start. On the stage, the two fighters each staked out a separate corner, where they stood unmoving. Time passed bit by bit — one minute, three minutes, five minutes... the two fighters who seemed

content to face off like this forever made the spectating students restless and they began to chat among themselves. The initially quiet and austere combat hall began to rustle with the noise of discussion...

"How long are they planning to face off like that? This is too boring."

"Isn't that freshman already half-crippled? Why does that Leiting person have to be so careful? Is it necessary?" All these were complaints by the bored people.

"That new cadet's stance is a little cryptic. It's necessary for the Leiting candidate to be cautious."

"Looks like, Leiting's representative can't figure out the depth of the other's move either. But waiting is more advantageous for the Leiting candidate. Even though the fight is more boring this way, this is undeniably the correct way..." These were the viewpoints of those who supported the prolonged impasse.

The views of the people below the stage were varied. Some scorned Leiting, some supported them, but no one believed that the New Cadet Regiment had any chance of making a comeback in this match. This was because Li Yingjie was already heavily injured, while Song Lianlu of Leiting was completely unharmed. Furthermore, Song Lianlu was obviously the stronger of the two fighters, so unless there was a major accident, the outcome would not change anymore. Right now, all the audience was waiting for was when Song Lianlu would officially defeat Li Yingjie and clinch the victory.

Just when everyone thought that this impasse would continue, Li Yingjie seemed to have run out of stamina and could not hold on any longer. His body swayed slightly...

Song Lianlu's gaze brightened, and long prepared, he dashed in, leaping at Li Yingjie.

At the moment Li Yingjie had swayed, that immense pressure from that move pressing down on Song Lianlu had collapsed, the threatening sense of danger hanging over his head disappearing completely. Song Lianlu believed that Li Yingjie's broken body could not support the move any longer, so this was definitely the best opportunity for him to attack.

Just when Song Lianlu was about to hit the other's body, he saw the pale-faced Li Yingjie suddenly smile at him. This unexpected smile made Song Lianlu's heart clench, but victory was right in front of him — his fist would strike the opponent in the very

next second. Based on his strength, he believed that Li Yingjie was no longer able to muster the energy to fight on...

Watching from below the stage, when Ling Lan saw this scene, her expression changed abruptly and she stood up quickly. The corners of her lips twitched, but in the end, she only pressed her lips tight in a thin line, expression cold as she waited for the final outcome.

Unwilling to give up on this opportunity, despite the unease in his heart, Song Lianlu clenched his teeth and punched his fist forwards tenaciously. He could not simply give up on this chance just because he could not figure out Li Yingjie's strange smile. Instantly, he felt his fist strike a soft fleshy body.

Bullseye! Song Lianlu was overjoyed — this meant he had won this match.

But before he could even smile in relief and joy, he felt his abdomen hit by a large force. It instantly broke through his defensive layer of internal energy, penetrating into his body.

"Pffft!" A mouthful of blood sprayed out from Song Lianlu's mouth. The powerful force had directly injured his internal organs — his entire body was sent stumbling back seven to eight steps before he managed to stop. However, right after that, he felt his knees fold and he slumped to sit on the ground.

The cause of this phenomenon was the strange and erratic internal energy running amok in his body. It was brutalizing his innards, nerves, and muscles, leaving Song Lianlu with no more strength to remain standing.

Meanwhile, on the other side, Li Yingjie had similarly been sent stumbling back several steps by Song Lianlu's attack. He retreated even further than Song Lianlu, only stopping when he reached the edges of the stage. Compared to Song Lianlu's injuries, Li Yingjie was undoubtedly hurt even worse. Mouthfuls of blood were being heaved out uncontrollably from his mouth, but even so, he still smiled as he stared at Song Lianlu, smugly and arrogantly.



"This brat, actually choosing a mutually destructive outcome!" In the second-floor box, Li Shiyu smacked a palm into the wall in a fit of anger, leaving a palm print in it. At one

side, Yun Xiu's heart ached once more — it looked like the fewer than few credits he had could not be saved anymore.

Still, heartache aside, he was even more worried about the condition of Li Yingjie. "Shiyu, will your cousin be fine after taking that blow?"

"As long as he still breathes, he won't die," said Li Shiyu flatly.

Li Shiyu may have sounded indifferent, but he was still worried for that disappointing cousin of his deep inside. After all, that brat had clearly been injured severely and was likely unable to move anymore. It was very probable that he would faint dead away on the stage in the very next second. Li Yingjie had not chosen to dodge that heavy blow by Song Lianlu, using his body to take it forcefully instead... this was full on direct internal damage.

Of course, Li Shiyu also knew well that it was not that Li Yingjie could not dodge — that swaying motion from before, Li Shiyu knew that it had been a lure because the Li family had that particular combination move. However, he had not thought that Li Yingjie would use the method of exchanging injury for injury to counterattack. Although Li Shiyu felt that this was somewhat not worth it, he had to admit that for Li Yingjie to inflict heavy damage on his opponent, this was the only option which had any chance of succeeding. It should be known that if Li Yingjie had chosen to dodge, the opponent would also have had a similar chance of evading Li Yingjie's killer move...

"This brat has become much more ruthless than before." *'Not only towards others, but also towards himself. Being able to take such ruthless action, this brat has grown up a little more... it is just unclear whether this growth is good or bad,'* thought Li Shiyu somewhat dispiritedly.



On the stage, Li Yingjie knew he was smiling because he had gravely injured the opponent. The aftereffects of the Li family killing move would be more than enough to trouble the other considerably. He had avenged himself — even if he did not win the match, he did not feel disheartened. He believed that his companions would definitely recover this loss.

Li Yingjie was in fact already at his limit. He felt his head spinning and his vision blur

— these were the symptoms of massive blood loss. He knew he should lie down and receive first aid, but for some reason, he did not want to just lie down like this. He wanted to see Boss Lan's face and observe his expression, but he just did not have the strength left to even turn his head around...

*'What a pity, not being able to see Boss Lan's expression at this time... I wonder if he would be satisfied with my performance today?'* Li Yingjie thought somewhat bitterly. So he had yearned so much for Boss Lan's acknowledgement...

"Li Yingjie, today, I'm proud of you!" The distinctly cold voice belonging to Ling Lan rang out by Li Yingjie's ears. This voice made Li Yingjie's spirits perk up; he actually managed to turn his head and saw that icy yet domineering face of Boss Lan.

Currently, Ling Lan had once again walked over to stand by the edge of the stage. Even though his face was as cold and flat as usual, Li Yingjie could clearly feel the sincerity of his words...

*That will do!* Li Yingjie closed his eyes in satisfaction, a smile on his lips as he toppled backwards. However, someone very quickly caught him — it was the referee of the fights, Colonel Tang Yu.

The moment Colonel Tang Yu saw Li Yingjie's condition, he knew the other was already completely unconscious, unable to continue fighting. His condition was dangerous as well — even without using internal energy to probe the other's body, he could tell the other had received extensive internal damage, because blood was still flowing unstoppably from Li Yingjie's mouth even now.



# Chapter 255

## Qi Long Enters the Stage!

"Staff, send him to the treatment centre immediately!" Tang Yu shouted. Two uniformed staff members brought a stretcher onto the stage, quickly whisking Li Yingjie away to the treatment centre.

Seeing this, Ling Lan turned to instruct Qi Long, "Notify Xie Yi quickly. Tell him to go with them and keep us updated."

Qi Long quickly contacted Xie Yi, telling him to follow Li Yingjie to the treatment centre, and to give them timely reports on Li Yingjie's condition.

This combat method of Li Yingjie's which fully displayed his unwillingness to lose even if it would result in an internecine outcome <sup>1</sup> had moved Qi Long, Wu Jiong, and the others. It had also let the members of the New Cadet Regiment see a whole new side of the arrogant-to-the-point-of-annoying Li Yingjie.

It turned out that that detestable 2nd generation ancestor, who would every so often push them around with his abilities and family background, was as willing as them to put his all into fighting for his companions' freedom and their futures. At this time, even those New Cadet Regiment members who bore some dislike for Li Yingjie found themselves silently laying down their grudges...

Since you treat me with sincerity, then I will also treat you sincerely. We are comrades willing to brave life and death together, advancing hand-in-hand without ever giving up!

Li Yingjie was very quickly carted away, leaving a still relatively conscious Song Lianlu on the field. Tang Yu announced expressionlessly, "The second match, 4th year Song Lianlu of the Leiting Mecha Clan wins! Overall, the score is now at 1-1."

Tang Yu had just announced the results when Song Lianlu on the other side could not hold on any longer either, collapsing to the ground in a dead faint. Tang Yu could only send someone to cart Song Lianlu to the treatment centre as well. It had only been two matches, but all four fighters involved had had to be admitted into the treatment

centre — it was clear to see how intense the fights were this time.

A cold gleam flashed through Ling Lan's eyes, and the surrounding temperature dropped by several degrees. Qi Long and Wu Jiong could not help but shiver — without having to ask, they knew that Boss Lan was currently very angry, otherwise the temperature would not drop so significantly. Still, they were very happy to see Boss Lan react this way. This meant that Boss Lan was about to go berserk, and the fate of the Leiting contingent could only be even worse than Luo Lang and Li Yingjie's.

Qi Long and Wu Jiong's anticipatory *schadenfreude* was, at the heart of it, because Leiting had been too brutal. Their fighters had had no intention of stopping the moment victory was determined <sup>2</sup>. Otherwise, Luo Lang and Li Yingjie would not have been injured so badly, and Ling Lan would not have become so angry.

Following Tang Yu's announcement, the waiting Lin Zhidong finally let out a sigh of relief. They had finally won this match. He had not expected the opponent to be this strong, able to fight so fiercely against Leiting's representative... Lin Zhidong was somewhat regretful — perhaps he should have found out more about the opponents before making arrangements. However, he only wavered for an instant, and then Lin Zhidong's eyes became steady again.

With the overall score at 1-1, the two sides were again at the starting line. Of the subsequent three matches, he only needed to win two, and Leiting would win this wagered fight. Compared to the other side who had already played all their trump cards, he still had two of the strongest jokers <sup>3</sup> in his hand — this fight, it was impossible for him to lose.

Lin Zhidong looked towards the two seniors seated beside him watching the fights, and a trace of respect shone in his eyes. With a bowed posture, he softly asked one of them, "Senior Feng-ming, the next match, I may have to trouble you to fight, to clinch another victory for Leiting." These two powerhouses were not people he could order around casually; he needed to ask whether they were willing.

One of them, the man Lin Zhidong had called Senior Feng-ming, laughed brightly at the question, "Seeing them fight so well, my hands have indeed begun to itch. The next round, I'll fight."

His smile as wide as ever, he turned his head to look in the direction of the New Cadet Regiment area. His gaze was tinged with admiration and approval; it looked like he

had a very good impression of the New Cadet Regiment. In the end, he did not forget to advise, "Zhidong, if Leiting really wins, inform Qiao Ting that we cannot bully them. We need to cultivate them well. They will definitely become the future supporting pillars of our Leiting."

Freshly admitted into the military academy, and they were already able to fight on equal terms with older cadets like themselves — he believed that the futures of these youths would perhaps be even better than theirs.

Lin Zhidong smiled and nodded. "That goes without saying. Otherwise, I would not have arranged this wagered fight." The connotation was that he had set his sights on the other side, which was why he wanted to take them in wholesale.

Senior Feng-ming nodded and said nothing more. Meanwhile, the other strong and good-looking youth beside him said levelly, "The freshmen this year are indeed very strong!"

"Boss Huo?" Senior Feng-ming turned in bewilderment to stare at his team leader, unsure why the other would say this.

"Two Qi-Jin stage masters have already come out. What level is the remaining three at?" The good-looking youth said with a half-smile and a quirked brow.

Senior Feng-ming began to muse in silence at those words, while Lin Zhidong had also been startled into realisation. Slackjawed, he asked, "Boss Huo, you mean... no, they can't all be at Qi-Jin stage!" Lin Zhidong shook his head repeatedly in denial, "That's definitely impossible. How could there be so many Qi-Jin stage masters among the freshmen? Two or three would already be stretching the limits... they must be using the principle of Tianji's horse racing. The next one must definitely be their strongest fighter."

Hearing this, the good-looking youth only swept a dispassionate gaze at the somewhat panicking Lin Zhidong, mentally shaking his head. Although Lin Zhidong performed pretty well on all fronts, he was still not from the military strategy specialization after all, unable to truly hold steady during times of crisis... However, this was already Qiao Ting's problem. Since he had already let go, he needed to believe that Qiao Ting could support the whole of Leiting.

On the other side, Lin Zhidong had just submitted the name list when Little Four

alerted Ling Lan, saying, "Boss, the other side has sent out Nie Feng-ming!"

"The second strongest, is it?" Currently, Ling Lan could only send out either Qi Long or Wu Jiong. Comparatively, the public regiment commander Wu Jiong could less afford to lose. Ling Lan's gaze landed decisively on Qi Long. Although Qi Long's physical skills level was higher than Wu Jiong's by two levels, he was still no match for the opponent. Still, Ling Lan believed that Qi Long would be able to learn much from this fight...

"Qi Long, prepare to fight!" Ling Lan ordered.

At her words, Wu Jiong's spirits sank as Qi Long shouted excitedly, "Got it, Boss!"

Both of them had had their fighting spirits stoked by the previous two matches and wanted to be the third to fight. Unfortunately, Ling Lan had chosen Qi Long in the end. Thus, one dejected, one gleeful — two distinctly different expressions appeared just like that before Ling Lan.

Facing the endlessly mournful and piteous signals Wu Jiong was emitting, Ling Lan rubbed her brow and said helplessly, "Wu Jiong, you'll get your turn. Don't rush."

Ling Lan's words made Wu Jiong's eyes light up, and he instantly tucked away his previously mournful expression as he threw a smug look in Qi Long's direction. *You can bloody enjoy yourself in this match first; next round is my turn.*

Right then, Wu Jiong did not know that Qi Long was actually a pitiful cannon fodder Ling Lan had sent off to die — obtaining the final victory would depend on him and Ling Lan.

Tang Yu received the name lists sent by both sides and the moment time was up, he announced, "Leiting Mecha Clan vs New Cadet Regiment, 3rd round, 5th year Nie Feng-ming against 1st year Qi Long."

This announcement caused a commotion to break out below the stage. In particular, those older cadets sported faces full of shock. They had never expected that, for this match, Leiting would actually dig out their previous vice regiment commander. Since he had appeared, then would the previous Leiting regiment commander appear as well? That person was the number one within the military academy for physical combat!

After both representatives had stepped onto the stage, having obtained confirmation from both sides that they were ready, Colonel Tang Yu coolly declared, "Match start!"

Following this cry, Nie Feng-ming made the same decision as Song Lianlu earlier. He wanted to observe the opponent's strength before making a decision, so he did not launch an attack. Instead, he immediately moved into a defensive position, his eyes closely watching the opponent's stance and movements.

Nie Feng-ming thought that his opponent would do the same, but Qi Long surprised him. After jumping back and forth several times to stretch and loosen his muscles, Qi Long suddenly accelerated and charged forwards, coming up to Nie Feng-ming in the blink of an eye, lifting a hand to send a fist hurtling straight at the other's face.

Qi Long's fighting style was not like the typical balanced, simultaneously offensive and defensive, combat of the Chinese Federation. His style was closer to that of the neighbouring Caesar Empire — full-force attacks, substituting offence as defence. It could almost be said that defence did not exist for Qi Long.

Although Ling Lan had always wanted Qi Long to learn some defence, after multiple sessions of intense torment, Qi Long had walked onto a different path of training. Since he could not defend well, then he might as well not defend at all and focus all of his strength into increasing his body's resistance and ability to take hits <sup>4</sup>. Within Ling Lan's learning space, this type of training method was named Body Refining. It was one of the hardest paths to walk, but once it came to fruition, according to Ling Lan, he would have an indestructible body, able to withstand up to 100,000 catties <sup>5</sup> of force.

Thus, Nie Feng-ming was destined to have no chance of observing his opponent — a wild barrage of attacks had begun bearing down on him.

Nie Feng-ming weaved left and right, finally dodging this sudden wild attack of Qi Long's. He was almost drenched in cold sweat by fear. It was fortunate that he had plenty of battle experience — if someone weaker were in his place, they would certainly have been pummelled silly, falling in bafflement beneath these flurry of wild punches before they could even show what they could do.

Nie Feng-ming gradually got used to this unreasonable and brutish method of attacking — he began to inject some counterattacks in between his initial dodging. The two fighters went back and forth exchanging blows, throwing punches and kicks.

The fighting was intense; it was difficult to determine who would win anytime soon.

Watching this, Tang Yu's eyebrows quirked and a slight smile emerged on his face. At the beginning, Qi Long's disorganised attack made him think that this youth was the weakest representative of the New Cadet Regiment, perhaps only included to make up the numbers. But now from the looks of it, he had misjudged.

His seemingly reckless actions were actually very systematic — every attack was directed at a tricky spot which would harass the opponent. Even more astounding was the fact that the trajectory of his every attack also shielded all the fatal weaknesses and openings of his own body very well. If the opponent wanted to strike those spots, he would have to choose to battle it out with Qi Long with brute force, otherwise his efforts would be futile.

Colonel Tang Yu was filled with silent admiration. Who'd have thought that there would be so many highly talented youths among this year's freshmen? This youth especially, had progressed even further than his previous two teammates in the realm of physical skills. It could even be said that, while others were still at the stage of learning through mimicry, he had already begun to seek out and develop a combat style exclusive to himself.

Tang Yu's gaze was involuntarily drawn to peer at the area below the stage. There were still two more youths... would they be just as outstanding?

# Chapter 256

## The Unkillable Roachie!

In the rest area of the Leiting Mecha Clan, the expressions of many had turned extremely ugly. Who the heck was this youth? Why could he fight evenly with their previous vice regiment commander?

Lin Zhidong could not help but ask Boss Huo beside him, "Boss Huo, can you tell what level that youth is at?" As Qi Long was the primary attacker right now, with Nie Feng-ming defending passively, it was hard to tell for now what realm the opponent's physical skills were at.

Boss Huo responded dispassionately, "It won't be lower than Feng-ming's by much, otherwise Feng-ming would not be so passive. However, this is just temporary." No matter how strong someone at the early stages of Qi-Jin was, they would not be able to hinder Nie Feng-ming to this extent — that youth on the field was certain to already be at the middle stages of Qi-Jin. The only question was which minor level in the middle stages he was at.

Lin Zhidong's face paled at these words, and he said with a rasp, "Middle stage Qi-Jin? How can this be?" For the past few years, even if the freshmen had great talent, some admitted at the level of Qi-Jin, they would still only have just stepped into early stage Qi-Jin. Take Zhang Jing-an for example. Looking back throughout the history of the military academy, it was still only that one year 20 years ago, when General Ling Xiao had entered the academy, that a student had entered the school already at the middle stage of Qi-Jin. It had caused a rather large commotion back then.

With a troubled expression, Lin Zhidong looked towards that youth engaged in a close fight on the stage with Nie Feng-ming. Could this be the aberrant Zhang Jing-an had been talking about?

With much difficulty, Lin Zhidong pressed down the shock in his heart to say resentfully, "I just knew it. For the third round they would definitely send out the strongest one in their team. Luckily I had arranged for Senior Feng-ming to fight..." If he had sent out their weakest member here, they would very likely have already lost this match. He had initially thought to easily finish off the other side with a breezy 3-

0, yet the score was now already 1-1. However, Lin Zhidong still hoped that Leiting could be ahead in points overall, so they would be able to fight from a superior position instead of being pressured to perform with a disadvantage in the count.

Hearing this, Boss Huo could not help but glance at the rest area of the New Cadet Regiment. Was this youth on the stage right now really their strongest fighter? Why had there been a sudden flash of cold air just earlier, which had made fear stir in his heart? Was it an illusion, or was there some powerful instructor from the academy present? Boss Huo could not find an answer, and so could only set aside the concerns in his heart and continue to watch the fight on the stage.

Meanwhile, on the side of the New Cadet Regiment, only Wu Jiong remained by Ling Lan's side. He was clenching his fists, expression nervous as he kept a close watch on the stage. Seeing Qi Long push back the opponent again and again, he could not hold back the joy from his face as he turned to Ling Lan and asked, "Boss Lan, don't you think Qi Long has a chance to win this match?" Qi Long was fighting so well, and he had always been very strong — he would not disappoint them.

Right then, Ling Lan had her arms folded across her chest as she coolly watched the moves exchanged by the fighters on the stage. This was her usual habit — copying the combat moves of the real world and feeding them into the learning space. Besides being able to earn some amount of contribution points this way, she could also obtain the improved and further refined ultimate moves developed by the instructors based on the moves she fed the learning space for free. From Ling Lan's perspective, this could be said to be killing two birds with one stone.

To Wu Jiong's question, she replied instantly, "The fight has just begun, it is too early to determine."

Frankly, Ling Lan could see very clearly that it actually was not impossible for Qi Long to win, but the probability was extremely small. Even though he seemed to be fighting his opponent evenly for now, the fight appearing to be extremely exciting, Ling Lan could clearly sense that the flow of the match was already gradually leaning in favour of Nie Feng-ming. If Qi Long continued to fight like this, his chances of winning would only keep decreasing.

But would Qi Long change his fighting style? No! Thus, Qi Long's loss, Ling Lan could already almost see it...



However, it was not completely impossible — all of it would depend on whether Qi Long could achieve a personal breakthrough on the stage. To overpower the strong from a weaker position, the chance lay in securing a breakthrough during the fight, and Qi Long truly had the potential to do so.

Ling Lan could not help but recall the time back when they had been six years old, during the entrance test of the Central Scout Academy — Qi Long's combat moves had been extremely immature, but he had unexpectedly achieved a personal breakthrough then... perhaps she could place a little hope on this.

The people below the stage were nervous and conflicted, while the two on the stage were getting more and more engrossed in their fight. Qi Long's combat style had always been attack, attack, attack, with no pauses to take stock or defend. He was the type who became more and more berserk as he fought — the more pressure he was under, the harder he fought back. In Ling Lan's words, he was an unkillable roachie. Therefore, despite Nie Feng-ming having the upper hand in terms of the flow of the match, in terms of attack, Qi Long seemed to be on a roll. With the exception of people like Ling Lan whose realm was high enough to discern the true face of things, the other people were all watching as if through cloud and mist. Even if Leiting was extremely confident in Nie Feng-ming, they could not help but find their hearts beating erratically at this moment.

"What's going on?" Lin Zhidong was flustered, "Boss Huo, didn't you say Senior Feng-ming would take control of the situation? Why isn't there any sign of this even now?"

Boss Huo's thick eyebrows knitted tightly, and he replied, "Don't rush, keep watching! The opponent is not weak, but, I estimate that he is weaker than Feng-ming by one minor level..."

"Boss Huo, you've made out the levels?" Pleasant surprise bloomed on Lin Zhidong's face. As long as the opponent was not stronger than Senior Feng-ming, he was not afraid.

"Hn. The spots that the opponent has been attacking are all the weak points of Feng-ming's moves, making it very uncomfortable for Feng-ming to fight." Boss Huo's eyebrows remained locked together. "The opponent seems to know Feng-ming's combat moves very well... leading Feng-ming to be countered at every turn. Still, even so, the opponent has no way of taking Feng-ming down. Based on this point alone, we can tell that the opponent's strength is weaker than Feng-ming's, otherwise Feng-

ming would be finding it even more difficult to fight."

"Then, when will Senior Feng-ming be able to turn the situation around?" Lin Zhidong's combat realm was too low, so he really could not tell anything much from watching. He could only ask Boss Huo once again.

Boss Huo answered, "Wait patiently for a little longer. It should be soon." He had barely finished saying that when he suddenly smiled and added, "There's no need to wait anymore. Feng-ming is already turning things around now. He should finish off the opponent very quickly."

Only at this point did Boss Huo notice the shifting of the flow towards Feng-ming. The time it took for him to come to this conclusion was obviously behind Ling Lan's — it was clear to see that in terms of vision, Boss Huo was no match for Ling Lan.

However, Boss Huo was still astounded enough at the capability of this year's freshmen. Thinking back to when they had first entered the academy, there had only been one early stage Qi-Jin combat master, and that had already been enough to send the military academy into rapture, pooling their resources to focus on cultivating that talent. Who could have imagined that this year, Qi-Jin stage combat masters were almost like a dime a dozen, popping out one after the other... Was it because Qi-Jin masters were now mainstream, or had their year just been too lousy?

"Could it be that the military academy is about to be turned upside down?" For some reason, Boss Huo suddenly had this thought, but he very soon shook it out of his head. In the military academy, the determination of whether one was strong did not depend on physical skills, but on mecha control. Perhaps, two years later, they would be able to see if these talented youths were equally aberrant when it came to mecha control.

On the stage, as expected, the flow of the match was developing as Ling Lan had predicted. Nie Feng-ming had become used to Qi Long's berserker style attack mode, and was slowly turning the situation around. Qi Long's initially fierce attacks gradually toned down, and his attacks even seemed to give off a sense of being forced and restricted. With this, everyone believed that, not too long after, Nie Feng-ming would certainly be able to defeat his opponent, clinching the victory for this round.

However, everyone had been too idealistic — another 50 to 60 moves passed, and still there was no sign of Qi Long's defeated figure. Even though he was not fighting as freely and wildly as he did at the start, he was still holding on...

Another ten minutes passed, and Qi Long was still holding on...

Twenty minutes passed, and Qi Long was still holding on...

Thirty minutes went by, and Qi Long was still holding on...

"F\*ck, that freshman is really an indestructible cockroach!" Qi Long's tenacity finally gained him the admiration and respect of some of the older cadets. How was this freshman so tenacious and resistant to damage? Several times, it was obvious that he had been struck by Nie Feng-ming's fists and legs — many people thought that Qi Long would be injured by this, and that even if he was not hurt, he would still end up shifting his posture and attack stance due to the pain, leading him to lose the ability to use his offence as defence.

Of course, once that happened, Nie Feng-ming would jump on the chance to launch consecutive attacks and bring him down completely. But surprisingly, even after taking several attacks, Qi Long seemed not to feel anything. The attack motions of his hands were not at all affected — instead, Nie Feng-ming was greatly shocked by Qi Long's pain-free reaction, so much so that *he* forgot to continue attacking. This gave Qi Long a breather and he forcefully tided his way through the attack.

"Damn, does that fellow not have any pain receptors?" Many times they saw Nie Feng-ming's forceful fists strike the other's body — even the audience watching from below could feel their bodies ache in sympathetic pain, but Qi Long remained indifferent, no change at all in his expression.

"What a monster!" Even if his strength was weaker than themselves, meeting such an opponent would cause anyone to have a headache. Frankly, Nie Feng-ming currently indeed found himself presented with a terrible headache. He even wondered if this youth before him was a robot, just cloaked in a layer of human skin.

"Looks like this match has turned into a fight of endurance. Now we just need to see who runs out of stamina first." Those who were astute had already figured out that the outcome of the fight would not be determined anytime soon.

"That body of Qi Long's is truly abnormal. Even though he's hit, it looks as if he was only tickled. This match is going to drag on for a while; it would be great if the opponent could be worn down." Wu Jiong stared excitedly at the stage. Every time he saw Qi Long fight, he would be unbelievably excited. It could not be helped — Qi Long's

combat style was just like that, every punch meeting flesh, no flairs and dramatics, his pure strength doing all the talking.

"The opponent is extremely collected. At present, Qi Long has no advantage!" Ling Lan replied with a frown. Qi Long may be acting extremely nonchalant, but she had still seen his face twitch slightly whenever he had been hit. It wasn't that it didn't hurt — Qi Long was just suppressing it by force.

Great. Each one of this bunch of brats is even more tolerant than the one before... they were all bloody turning into teenage mutant ninja turtles <sup>1</sup> now. She could only hope Qi Long's internal injuries were not too severe, otherwise he would not be able to hold up for long. Ling Lan worried in her heart.

Ling Lan actually did not mind whether Qi Long won or lost. She only hoped that Qi Long would be able to find a chance to breakthrough during this match, pushing past his current bottleneck.

Mind you, Qi Long had been stuck at middle stage Qi-Jin for almost a full year now — although she had sought Qi Long out whenever she had time to spar with him and put him through the wringer, the effects had been insignificant. Perhaps Qi Long had already gotten used to her combat methods, for his bottleneck had not budged at all from their sessions. This was also why Ling Lan had chosen to let Qi Long clash with the second strongest on the opposing team. Even as Ling Lan plotted to ensure the final victory would be theirs, she also hoped Qi Long would be able to benefit from this fight.

"The opponent is pulling away!" Wu Jiong suddenly stood up to shout. At the same time, the development playing out on the stage made Ling Lan's brow crease into a deep furrow.

# Chapter 257

## Breakthrough in a Hopeless Situation!

Nie Feng-ming, who had been fighting close to Qi Long all this while, suddenly retreated, distancing himself from Qi Long. Qi Long had never been a fighter who relied on speed. He was unable to keep up with the opponent's unexpected move, and a considerable distance was put between them.

A cold light flashed through Ling Lan's eyes — she knew that Nie Feng-ming was probably about to unleash some ultimate move!

Sure enough, Nie Feng-ming suddenly crouched low and then sprang up into the air. Airborne, a surge of Qi seemed to flow from the soles of his feet into his right arm.

With an audible tearing sound, Nie Feng-ming's right arm bulged — the rippling muscles tore through his school uniform, his sleeves turning into tatters.

"Pneumatic Punch!" Nie Feng-ming shouted, his right hand clenched into a tight fist which was hurtling towards Qi Long.

"Good timing!" The fighting spirit in Qi Long's eyes flared. Even if he knew he was no match for the opponent, Qi Long would never cower. He resolutely threw out his own right fist in response, "Take my One-Inch Punch!" Only the 3rd form of One-Inch Punch would be able to help him weather this move.

Seeing this scene unfold, even someone as calm and composed as Ling Lan could no longer sit still. She stood up abruptly, her expression coldly focused as she waited for the final outcome.

The two punches collided with a loud 'boom!' — endless energy surged from the two fists, radiating out from where the fists were connected. This surge of energy shook the entire stage, causing the stage to actually emit groaning noises, creaking as it begun to quake.

Beneath the feet of the two fighters, the ground suddenly shattered. Of course, this was just virtual 3D imaging, but it made the audience feel as if it were real. It was as if

the stage beneath the fighters' feet would really be unable to hold on past the next second and thoroughly collapse.

The cracks spread rapidly outwards — the speed and range of those around Nie Feng-ming were slower and smaller, while those around Qi Long were quicker and larger. This point alone proved that the stacked strength Qi Long was wielding with the aid of the 3rd form of One-Inch Punch was still a bracket inferior to the opponent's in terms of internal energy. If not, the remnant force from his opponent beneath his feet would not be so large <sup>1</sup>.

Both fists stayed connected for several seconds; in the end, the two of them could not withstand the opposing forces and were sent flying back at the same time.

With a somersault in the air, Nie Feng-ming dispersed the reaction force and landed soundly on one corner of the stage. Still, even so, he felt his Qi and blood roiling in his chest, a sickly sweet coppery taste at the back of his throat surging to get out. He clenched his teeth and forcefully pushed back this bloody Qi. As the second strongest person in Leiting for physical skills combat, he would not allow himself to be visibly injured on the stage. This was his pride.

Meanwhile, Qi Long was in a worse state. He had no way of dispersing the energy as casually as Nie Feng-ming had — he was instantly sent flying, and in the air, he could not stop himself from spewing out a mouthful of blood.

Qi Long's body had initially already been injured by the opponent; he had merely been suppressing it by relying on his tough body. However, at this moment, being pressured by this tremendous surge of Qi-Jin from the opponent, he could no longer hold back the extent of his injuries. Not only that, this forceful clash had heaped yet more injury on top of his previous injuries, thus resulting in his spewing of blood the moment he was sent flying.

Qi Long was not as vain as Nie Feng-ming — since he could not do it, he might as well not force it. He allowed his body to slam heavily onto the stage, leaving a dent on the already crumbling stage.

Qi Long pressed a hand to his chest as he fell to the ground. By this time, Colonel Tang Yu had already come up to his side, and he crouched down to ask, "Qi Long, can you still fight?" He did not ask him whether he admitted defeat, instead asking whether he could still fight — this was because the impression Qi Long had made in Colonel Tang

Yu's mind was that he was a youth who absolutely would not admit defeat.

Qi Long's lips split into a wide grin as he replied loudly, "Fight! Why wouldn't I fight? As long as I can still move, I'll fight till the end."

Even though Qi Long had no dignity to speak of at this moment — his mouth and lips all coated with blood, looking somewhat frightening — his grin and those words and tone filled with conviction moved Colonel Tang Yu. Qi Long's honest face carried a look of determination and a somewhat silly smile, but it was much purer than those clever people and their schemes. He was someone who devoted his entire body and soul into combat — this kind of person would often climb much higher than those intelligent prodigies, walking further than they ever could.

Colonel Tang Yu felt his initially cold and hardened heart begin to burn, and he shouted out loud, "Good! Then let the fight continue!"

Tang Yu abruptly stood up and took two steps back to stand in the middle of the stage. This meant that the match was in a temporary time-out — the fight would need his declaration to resume.

A trace of gratitude flashed across Qi Long's drooping eyes. He looked to be unbelievably guileless, like such a nice guy, but Han Jijyun had always claimed he was in fact very black-bellied — he understood all the things he truly needed to understand. Indeed, that was true — like right now, Colonel Tang Yu's actions may not have been explicitly explained, but Qi Long still understood that the other was helping him.

Interrupting the fight was extremely advantageous to Qi Long. This gave him a chance to catch his breath and deal somewhat with his injuries. It also gave him the time to settle his chaotic Qi-Jin to restore some of his fighting strength.

Qi Long did not sit to rest, but slowly climbed off the ground. He could not let Colonel Tang Yu's good intentions be noticed by anyone else. Colonel Tang Yu saw Qi Long's slow movements, and a trace of approval flashed through his eyes. Able to use the time he had to recover his strength without any outward signs, this silly little fellow was not truly silly. However, this was even better. There were way too many plots and schemes in this world — even someone as formidable as god-class operator General Ling Xiao had not been able to avoid being set up and harmed — a little adaptability was never out of place.

Although Qi Long had obtained a chance to catch his breath, the time was not very long. In the span of a few breaths, Qi Long had stood up straight again.

"Can we start now?" Tang Yu asked Qi Long once again. Seeing Qi Long nod, he then turned to ask the same to Nie Feng-ming, and seeing Nie Feng-ming nod as well, he waved his arm and yelled, "The fight continues!"



During the time when Colonel Tang Yu had paused the match, Lin Zhidong had not been able to stop himself from frowning. He said, "Boss Huo, Colonel Tang Yu seems to be intentionally dragging the time." Even though Colonel Tang Yu was the teacher adviser of Leiting's regiment commander Qiao Ting, with regards to this wagered battle, Colonel Tang Yu was obviously leaning towards the side of the New Cadet Regiment.

"Hn, Colonel Tang Yu has a very favourable impression of this batch of new cadets. Looks like the six-person quota of next year has largely been decided now," Boss Huo sighed. Initially, he had hoped Leiting's freshmen would be able to secure one or two of the slots, but now, it looked like the chances were low.

Lin Zhidong gaped and said, "You're saying... these freshmen?"

"What do you think? Able to represent the New Cadet Regiment, these must be their strongest. And these people will undoubtedly be the future students of the mecha classes. Just the three freshmen who have already come out to fight are already enough to please Colonel Tang Yu... I only hope that the next two are truly, as you say, the weakest of the New Cadet Regiment's line-up. That way, our Leiting freshmen may still have some hope of becoming Colonel Tang Yu's students."

Lin Zhidong could see Boss Huo's displeasure, and said in response, "Boss Huo, as long as we win this wagered battle, we will be able to take in the entire New Cadet Regiment. Then, Colonel Tang Yu will still be the mecha instructor of Leiting."

"You're not wrong, but outsiders will never truly put their full effort into serving Leiting. I will still rest easier if our own Leiting people manage to obtain some slots," said Boss Huo with a solemn tone.

People they added in from the outside could be utilised, and utilised well at that, but



the full future of Leiting could not be entrusted to them. If by any chance the other held some grudge in their hearts and betrayed them from the inside, then it would truly be a tragedy for Leiting.

Lin Zhidong's heart clenched in fright, and he hurried to nod and say, "Boss Huo speaks truly. I will be careful. There is still one year's time. By whatever means, I will find a way to let Colonel Tang Yu accept one of Leiting's best talents."

At that, Boss Huo was finally satisfied. "That'll be fine!"

Lin Zhidong went silent however, beginning to wonder whether his initial thinking had been too simple. As Boss Huo had said, could outsiders really become the future pillars of Leiting?



On the stage, following Colonel Tang Yu's declaration to begin, Nie Feng-ming pounced. The opponent looked like he was at the end of his rope — if he did not attack now, was he going to wait until the opponent had recovered even more to fight? Nie Feng-ming would not let this opportunity go by.

One punch, two punches, three punches — every punch landed on flesh. Even though Qi Long had gained some time, it had not been enough for the roiling Qi-Jin in his body to settle back to normal. Therefore, when Nie Feng-ming attacked, despite wanting to punch back and block, Qi Long found that he actually no longer had the strength to swing his fists. He could only watch helplessly as he was struck.

Following these few punches, a great amount of blood once more poured from Qi Long's mouth. It went without question that his internal injuries were worsening. Qi Long did not know how much longer he could hold on for, but he could not resign himself to being defeated just like that. He thought of Luo Lang, who had been willing to take the risk and activate his innate talent for the sake of victory, and he also thought of Li Yingjie who, despite losing, had savagely taken a chunk of the opponent's flesh in recompense <sup>2</sup>.

Qi Long's eyes once again blazed with fire — what his companions could do, he needed to be able to do too! Even if he could not win, he would make the opponent pay a hefty price!

Qi Long's mind became sharper and sharper — even if he did not have any strength left to swing his fists, his eyes were locked tight on the opponent's fists, watching as those fists struck his body again and again...

How did it feel like to watch personally as he was tormented by another? Qi Long did not know. All Qi Long knew was that he had not been able to clearly see the opponent's fists at first, but those fists gradually slowed down in his vision, until it seemed as if they were moving in slow motion, individual still frames in his eyes.

From the moment the opponent began circulating his Qi, to the channeling of power into his fists, all of it was presented before him. The attack trajectory of the punches were so clear, unlike before when he had to estimate where the opponent would attack from. Now, he could see so clearly just by using his eyes — he could even determine from his vision which part was the point powering the attack just from its trajectory.

He knew that as long as his fist hit that spot, not only would he not feel the other's strength, that strength would also backfire on the opponent. But he just godd\*mn couldn't move right now! If he could move, he would be able to hit that spot, and he believed that he would not lose!

Qi Long was currently extremely frustrated. If he still had the energy, if he could still fight back... at this moment, Qi Long found to his pleasant surprise that his hand had moved. However, it could not keep up with the speed he needed — he had no way of reaching that spot with the time it would take his hand to get there.

No, he could not give up just like this! Right then, Qi Long could no longer feel the intense pain throughout his body. At that moment, there was only one thought in his mind — faster, faster, and even faster — to let his fist reach that spot in the time he needed it to...

Ling Lan, who had initially sat down again and was just watching Qi Long be abused, was forcefully holding back her desire to step in. When she saw Qi Long's fist twitch, her eyes abruptly brightened. However, Ling Lan feared that this was just a subconscious action of Qi Long's, and so remained reserved. But when she saw Qi Long's speed become increasingly faster, actually exceeding his original top speed in the end, she stood up once more.

At this moment, Ling Lan's eyes revealed her pleasant surprise. Could Qi Long really be this lucky? Actually breaking through in this sort of hopeless situation?

BAM! BAM! BAM! These were the sounds of punches striking flesh!

Nie Feng-ming's forehead was already coated with layers of sweat tracks. He did not know how many iron fists he had landed on the opponent's body, but other than some muscles spasms right at the start and some minor reactions to the pain, the opponent had actually not displayed any signs of feeling in the following few attacks. Not only that, the pressure the opponent was exerting on him was getting heavier and heavier — he was even beginning to question whether he was actually fighting a human being anymore.

Nie Feng-ming's attacks became increasingly quicker, his fists raining down on Qi Long's body like a torrential downpour. The blood flowing from Qi Long's lips continued to increase, until he was puking it out by the mouthful. Everyone thought that Qi Long no longer had any ability to fight back, that he would only be able to stand there and let Nie Feng-ming beat him as he liked...

Even Colonel Tang Yu could not help but wonder whether he should just announce Qi Long's loss, but Qi Long's eyes were still shining with determination. It was as if he had never lost his ability to fight, and was only waiting for the opportune chance.

"Bam!" This sound was different from the ones before it. Everyone stared in astonishment at the youth with his blood-soaked grin. Qi Long, who seemed as if he had no strength left to lift his fist and block, had actually managed to lift his fist to accurately meet the other's attacking fist. That sound just now was precisely the sound of the meeting of the two fists...

"Great!" Right here and now, even those seniors who did not think well of the new cadets could not help but cheer for Qi Long! Such an unkillable cockroach... under such circumstances, which everyone had thought was completely hopeless, he had finally counterattacked.

"What is this?" Nie Feng-ming's expression finally changed. He began to doubt himself — could it be that his fists had no strength at all behind them? Was this why he was unable to bring down the opponent, finally giving the other a chance to counterattack?

"Feng-ming, don't blank out, continue to fight!" Boss Huo saw Nie Feng-ming's expression of confusion, and quickly stood up to shout him out of it. As an outside observer, he could naturally tell that Qi Long's internal injuries had already reached a limit. Nie Feng-ming would only need to add on a few more hits to completely defeat

the opponent — no, perhaps just one more hit would do.

Nie Feng-ming quickly regained his senses. With a grit of his teeth, he swung his fists up again and sent them punching out fiercely at this youth before him!

"Bam!" What he struck was still the opponent's fist. The other had not punched any slower than he had, perfectly intercepting his own punch at the point where his strength had not reached its maximum, preventing him from using his full strength. It felt as horrible as being purposefully interrupted just when one was planning to relieve one's bowels <sup>3</sup>.

"I do not believe you can keep intercepting my fists!" Nie Feng-ming was already heated up from the battle. His fists rained down like a thunderstorm, but every punch was intercepted by Qi Long, each one intercepted at that most uncomfortable spot.

"Argh!" After punching for who knows how many times, Nie Feng-ming suddenly felt the hot blood roiling in his chest. His mouth opened and a mouthful of blood sprayed out, staining Qi Long's chest.

The many accurate blocks had caused his strength to be repressed, forced back into his body since it could not be released. After these multiple stunted attacks, his internal organs could no longer handle the accumulated backflow of energy, finally resulting in internal damage, causing him to no longer be able to hold back from puking blood.

# Chapter 258

## Fatal Weakness!

"Ah, what's going on? Why is Nie Feng-ming throwing up blood too? The opponent didn't even hit him!" The spectating people were all dumbfounded. Even some of those combat experts were boggled, with only a few people at a higher realm becoming speculative...

Inside the Wuji box, Han Yu, Wei Ji, and the rest, who had initially been happily chatting and joking around, not thinking much of this match, finally found their expression's twisting in shock. Han Yu in particular could not help but exclaim, "What the bloody hell is going on? It can't be that this is a supernatural encounter, right?"

The opponent was clearly not as skilled as Nie Feng-ming, and he had already been pummelled by Nie Feng-ming till he was half-crippled — even stranger was the fact that Nie Feng-ming had not been hit whatsoever... how then had he mysteriously gotten injured to the point that he was puking out blood?

Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun shared a glance, Zhao Jun's eyes similarly brimming with confusion. This was because there was no one who could intercept an opponent so many times at the precise spot where the opponent's strength was the weakest. As this bizarre situation had never occurred before, most people just could not conceive of it, and hence were unable to figure things out.

Li Lanfeng's eyes remained as calm as before, but inside his heart, he kept thinking that those movements were rather familiar — it was as if somewhere deep in his memory, someone else had done something similar before...

When Nie Feng-ming began throwing up blood, he had no choice but to stop attacking. He leapt back abruptly, pulling away, thinking that Qi Long would follow him, but unexpectedly, Qi Long only stood there, not moving a single step. Instead, Qi Long's eyes were wide as he continued to sport his split-mouthed grin — backdropped by his bloody face, his expression seemed rather stiff and eerie.

Nie Feng-ming swiped at the blood on the corner of his lips, eyes trained on this unbeatable youth before him. No matter how steady and level-headed he was, at this

moment, he could not help but become anxious internally. He sorely wished he could strike this detestable youth down with one punch and end this unending sticky-candy of a match.

"Feng-ming, be patient!" Right then, Nie Feng-ming heard a familiar voice ring out from behind him. Turning to look, he saw that Boss Huo had already come up to the edge of the stage, and was giving him a quiet reminder.

As long as the people by the stage did not climb onto the stage, verbal communication was within allowed parameters during the fights. Thus, Ling Lan's words to Li Yingjie, as well as Boss Huo's words now to Nie Feng-ming, were all considered legal actions — neither side would have any objections.

Nie Feng-ming nodded at Boss Huo, his initially slightly restless and impatient heart settling down. He turned once more to look at the motionless Qi Long — it was just as Boss Huo had said, the current Qi Long was not the Qi Long at the beginning of the match. Even though he looked half-crippled, for Nie Feng-ming to truly defeat the other, he needed to first find a way to avoid the other's perfectly timed interceptions.

Nie Feng-ming took a deep breath and moved. However, the direction he chose to attack in was no longer straight on, but from the side — he was betting that Qi Long's broken body was unable to move.

As expected, Qi Long's body did not move — his head did not even twitch. Only one fist again appeared abruptly before his eyes, again aiming for that most uncomfortable spot.

So the side doesn't work? Nie Feng-ming leapt back the moment his fist bumped Qi Long's. He then once again changed directions to get behind Qi Long.

This scene made everyone cry out in shock, because they all knew what Nie Feng-ming was planning — he wanted to attack Qi Long from behind. This action might seem somewhat unsporting, but on the battlefield, there was no such thing as fairness. Only the person who survived would be the winner.

However, were things really as he imagined them to be? Just as his foot was about to hit Qi Long's back, he suddenly found that a large fist was once more before his eyes, accurately striking the side of his kneecap.

There was a 'crack!' — this was the sound of a joint being dislocated. Qi Long's

strength had accurately struck at the most fragile spot on Nie Feng-ming's leg, finally causing Nie Feng-ming to grunt involuntarily.

Nie Feng-ming was no ordinary person — even though his knee had been unexpectedly dislocated by Qi Long, he did not yell out. With a stomp of his left leg, he flew backwards to once again stand at his original position. However, now he was using only his left leg as his support. His right leg was dragging on the ground, no longer able to exert any energy.

Qi Long had in fact not turned around completely. He had only shifted half a step, but this half step had been enough for Qi Long to obtain the angle he needed to swing his fist, intercepting the opponent's attack in a timely manner while bringing him the unexpected benefit of wounding the other further.

With this, the outcome of the match was once more shrouded in mystery — it was possible for either side to win or lose. After all, one person's body was heavily injured, while the other's right knee was dislocated. The scales of the match were once again balanced. At this point, even Boss Huo from Leiting could not help but frown, because now even he could not tell how this match would turn out.

He peered at Qi Long, who was still wearing that bloody grin, and felt that that grin of his was really too creepy and unnatural. In his memory, the other had seemed to be like this ever since he had begun using that inscrutable fist to intercept Nie Feng-ming's attacks...

Could it be...? Boss Huo's gaze lit up, and both his eyes locked onto Qi Long, tracking him closely. The fight was still ongoing — even though Nie Feng-ming's knee was dislocated, this did not prevent him from attacking. Very soon, Qi Long and Nie Feng-ming were once more engaged in combat.

This time, Boss Huo did not spare any of his attention on Nie Feng-ming. He put his entire focus on Qi Long — whether it was Qi Long's smile or gaze or even his reflexive actions, Boss Huo missed none of it. In the end, his eyes brightened even more. He had discovered what condition Qi Long was in right now.

Apparently, Qi Long was already at his limit. The grin on his face was not a true grin, only there because Qi Long just did not have any spare energy to shift the muscles of his face. He had funnelled all his remaining energy into his fists. As long as Nie Feng-ming continued to harass Qi Long, and drain all his energy, the other would fall in due

time...

While Boss Huo was just figuring out Qi Long's condition, Ling Lan, as Qi Long's boss, had already begun frowning deeply the moment Nie Feng-ming had chosen to attack Qi Long's back.

When Qi Long had shifted that half step to counterattack, the furrow of Ling Lan's brow had deepened even further. That's right, at that point, when no one else had noticed anything, Ling Lan had already discerned that Qi Long was already running on fumes.

For that half step, Qi Long had had to hold back the agonizing pain all across his body to move with a Herculean effort. Beneath both of Qi Long's almost immobile feet were two average-sized puddles. The puddles did not consist of the blood Qi Long had spat out from his mouth, but of sweat which had poured from his body when he had pushed through the pain to execute that half step...

Ling Lan closed her eyes in regret, feeling sorry for Qi Long. She knew Qi Long's personality well — as long as there was a chance of winning, he would not think of losing at all. However, Qi Long's breakthrough had still been too late. His internal injuries were too severe; his broken body simply could not support his counterattack.

However, this pity Ling Lan felt only lasted for a brief instant. What she prioritised the most was still the improvement Qi Long had gained in this match. Trading one defeat for Qi Long's breakthrough, Ling Lan felt that this was unbelievably worth it.

"Feng-ming, don't be so one-minded! Attack from all angles!" shouted Boss Huo once again.

Nie Feng-ming had the utmost trust in his boss. Thus, hearing his boss's instructions, he did not pause to think about it — with a spring of his left leg, he flew into the air like a large bird of prey. This time, he did not attack Qi Long directly, but in accordance with Boss Huo's instructions, he came up behind Qi Long...

And then he leapt into the air once more, sending a fist hurtling towards Qi Long's lower back!

With a 'bam!' the two fists collided forcefully. Although Qi Long tried his best to turn around, his battered body would not allow him to abuse it a second time, finally lodging its protest.



This time, Qi Long only managed to shift a small half step, even smaller than that of the first time. Although he did manage to turn, it was not a complete turn, so he did not have the time nor the space and angle to disrupt the opponent's attack. In order to protect his body, he could only take this attack by force.

This was the first direct Qi-Jin confrontation between Qi Long and Nie Feng-ming since Qi Long's breakthrough. The difference was that this attack of Nie Feng-ming's was of a tentative nature, and so did not contain his full power, so Qi Long managed to bear it.

The two fists could be seen to push against each other for about 1 to 2 seconds, and then Nie Feng-ming was sent flying back by the rebound force of the collision. Meanwhile, Qi Long's body swayed violently in place, and the blood which had stopped flowing began to trickle from his mouth once again. Still, even so, he did not retreat even half a step.

It was not that Qi Long did not want to retreat, but once he did, the breath holding him upright would escape. Even under these circumstances, Qi Long still did not want to give up, because he did not want to lose to anyone other than Boss. In Qi Long's mind, he could only lose to Ling Lan.

As expected! Nie Feng-ming landed on one foot, because his other leg was powerless, and to stabilise himself, he had to take several hops back. Though he looked a little clumsy and dishevelled, all this could not stop him from smiling. Due to Boss Huo's advice, he had found Qi Long's fatal weakness.

It turned out that Qi Long was really already at his limit, and could no longer turn around!

"Has it still been exposed in the end?" Ling Lan sighed. Even though Ling Lan had known that Qi Long's weakness would eventually be discovered by the opponent, Ling Lan had still hoped for a lucky fluke in her heart. She had hoped that Qi Long would have a chance to defeat the other before he was figured out by the opponent.

Since Nie Feng-ming had discovered Qi Long's weakness, he naturally did not prolong the fight. He once again moved to Qi Long's back and attacked with a rapid fist...

Qi Long was still holding on. From the stage, sound after sound of fists colliding could be heard. Following the increase of Nie Feng-ming's strength, the swaying of Qi Long's

body became more and more extreme. The blood never stopped flowing from his mouth, instead increasing in volume with time, until it was flowing out like water...

Now was the time! Nie Feng-ming sensed the power levels from Qi Long's fists once more, and his eyes instantly shone with a radiant light. The next move would be when the outcome would be decided — with just one more punch, he would defeat Qi Long.

However, he did not want to end things like this! As the second strongest combat expert within the military academy, this fight with Qi Long had greatly hurt his pride. Under the situation where he had the full upper hand, he had actually been inflicted with internal injury in a mysterious way. Moreover, the opponent had even found a chance to dislocate his knee. Nie Feng-ming felt that this performance of his was a disgrace. If he could not utterly crush the opponent, he would never be able to lift his head before the people of Leiting...

A trace a cruelty flashed through Nie Feng-ming's eyes. He took in a powerful breath, concentrating all the Qi-Jin in his body, and shouted, "Pneumatic Punch!"

## Chapter 259

# Giving Him a Taste of His Own Medicine!

Boss Huo stood up abruptly, yelling in shock, "Feng-ming, stop!"

On the stage, Tang Yu's expression changed drastically. With a shift, his body sprung into motion, prepared to stop this highly destructive ultimate move of Nie Feng-ming. If some major casualty occurred in these fights he was refereeing, it would be a great dereliction of duty...

There was a 'thwack', clearly distinct from the dull thumps of fists hitting flesh. This sound was obviously much crisper. Everyone found to their shock that, heaven knows when, another person had appeared on the stage.

He stood between Nie Feng-ming and Qi Long, easily holding Nie Feng-ming's fist with one hand. The fluttering of his sleeve proved that this person had just rushed onto the scene.

His fist in the other's palm, Nie Feng-ming's first feeling was that the other's strength was like a bottomless ocean. When the explosive power contained in his fists charged at the other, it was like a stone dropping into a tranquil sea, with nary a splash nor ripple. It was truly as if his strength had been swallowed whole by the boundless depths of the ocean.

This feeling lasted for only a brief instant, and then Nie Feng-ming perceived the opponent's strength as a large mountain — he was only standing there without counterattacking, but Nie Feng-ming could not budge an inch.

What frightened Nie Feng-ming even more was the extremely cold air the other was currently emitting. Nie Feng-ming accidentally made eye contact with the other, and saw endless blood-soaked killing intent. Nie Feng-ming's spirit and body were both already at their limits to begin with, his mental resistance at its lowest — this surge of bloody killing intent struck deep into his inner mind, inciting endless terror, and his body actually began to tremble uncontrollably.

Colonel Tang Yu had finally rushed to Nie Feng-ming's side by this time, but he was a

step too late. When he saw that Nie Feng-ming's attack had been intercepted by a passing stranger <sup>1</sup>, he instantly let out a sigh of relief.

However, he soon calmed down and was shocked by a realisation. He had in fact been the person closest to Nie Feng-ming, but the other had arrived a step ahead of him. Didn't this prove that the other was stronger than him?

Tang Yu stared in stupefied wonder at the other. The person was dressed in the regular green military academy uniform, was neither tall nor short, and his figure was somewhat on the slender side, but without the sense of fragile delicacy Luo Lang exuded. His straight-backed figure seemed to contain boundless energy — otherwise, he would not have been able to stop Nie Feng-ming's attack so easily without any harm to himself.

Most surprising was the fact that though he looked extremely cold-hearted and ruthless, this still could not conceal his young and immature face. That unfamiliar face and that extremely common freshman uniform instantly allowed Colonel Tang Yu to know the other's identity.

Tang Yu was not planning to berate the other. After all, Nie Feng-ming's last attack had indeed been too vicious. As teammates from the same group, wanting to save a comrade was perfectly justified — Tang Yu approved of it.

However, before Tang Yu could ask any questions, the students below the stage had already begun to exclaim:

"Who is that?"

"How did he suddenly appear on the stage?"

"Yeah, when did he go up?"

As the newcomer had moved too fast, many students whose realm was not high enough yet had only managed to see that a person had appeared on the stage out of thin air. They could not see how the other had gotten there, which was why they were so baffled.

"That person's speed has almost reached the limits of the human body!" Those people with adequate vision within the boxes all acknowledged this point, stunned to the depths of their heart. Although they did not know the other's background, without

discussing it beforehand, they all mutually noted his appearance, determined to investigate once they went back to find out who he was...

Tang Yu's complexion very quickly returned to normal, and he said to the person, "Cadet, thank you very much for your assistance. However, the fight is still in progress. Please leave the stage."

"That's unnecessary. This round, we, the New Cadet Regiment, have lost," announced Ling Lan dispassionately.

Tang Yu was taken aback, unsure whether the other could speak on behalf of the New Cadet Regiment, when from below the stage, the New Cadet Regiment representative Wu Jiong could be heard to call out, "That's right, we, the New Cadet Regiment, admit defeat for this round!"

Since the representative of the New Cadet Regiment had acknowledged the loss, Tang Yu did not raise any questions, instantly declaring, "The 3rd round, 5th year Nie Feng-ming wins! The overall score is 2-1, Leiting Mecha Clan in the lead over the New Cadet Regiment."

Tang Yu had barely finished his announcement when Ling Lan turned to look at the stubbornly upright Qi Long behind her. A surge of sour pain coursed through her heart. Although she had wanted Qi Long to break through, she had never intended for Qi Long to end up in such a terrible state, becoming so gravely injured. If she had not managed to intercept Nie Feng-ming's blow in time, the force of it would have shattered most of Qi Long's bones. Even if he managed to recover, Qi Long's initially amazingly sturdy body would be downgraded by several levels, perhaps even choking off Qi Long's boundless potential.

At this thought, the rage in Ling Lan's heart flared. She hated the other's viciousness, and cursed her own carelessness at taking things for granted. Fortunately, nothing truly regrettable had happened, otherwise she would have regretted it for life.

Ling Lan took in a deep breath, forcefully suppressing the burning rage in her heart. She said lightly to Qi Long, "The match is over. You can rest now."

The initially standing Qi Long heard this, and as if receiving some command, he collapsed. Tang Yu reacted swiftly, nimbly catching Qi Long and checking on his injuries. His complexion paled slightly, and he yelled out, "Staff, send him to the

treatment centre, quickly!" He had not expected Qi Long's internal injuries to be so severe, and the boy had still fought on for so long, unwilling to fall till the very end... what kind of mental support did this youth have?

Tang Yu could not help but think back to the previous fighters, Luo Lang and Li Yingjie. They too were the same — withstanding almost unbearable injuries to execute horrifying counterattacks... he could not help but look at this cold-faced youth before him. Even if the other had not made it clear, he could tell that the true leader of the New Cadet Regiment was likely him.

Very soon, Qi Long had been sent to the treatment centre. As his sworn brother, Han Jijun naturally could not sit still any longer. Without waiting for Ling Lan's orders, he took the initiative to accompany Qi Long...

At this time, Nie Feng-ming, who had been lost in the haze of bloodlust, finally overcame his inner demon by relying on his excellent mental fortitude, becoming aware once more.

"You've woken up?" Ling Lan's expression was still cold and emotionless, but the suppressed rage in her eyes burned brightly once more following Nie Feng-ming's awakening.

"This match is over. Cadet, please let go of the representative." Although Nie Feng-ming's final Pneumatic Punch had been somewhat vicious and uncalled for, nothing unsalvageable had happened after all, so Tang Yu was hoping to minimise the fuss. After all, the match involving Nie Feng-ming was already over — the New Cadet Regiment would not gain anything from chasing the issue.

Hearing Tang Yu's words, Nie Feng-ming began to struggle, trying to wrest free of Ling Lan's grasp. For some reason, he just felt that this cold youth before him was way too dangerous. His instinctive reaction was to get away from the other.

"We admit defeat because our skills are no match for our opponent. However, those who intend to harm my brothers will have to pay the due price!" Ling Lan's icy voice reverberated throughout the entire combat hall. This was Ling Lan's declaration to the entire military academy — towards anyone who would harm her brothers, she would not show any mercy.

Yes, Ling Lan was truly angry now. She wanted everyone in the military academy to

know that she, Ling Lan, was no cowardly limp-egg that would willingly shrink away quietly and just take what others dished out <sup>2</sup>.

Her words had barely faded when Ling Lan's hand on the other's fist abruptly lifted, and Nie Feng-ming was thrown bodily into the air. When he was about 2 metres away from the ground, Nie Feng-ming felt a cold and powerful hand press on the back of his skull, which then pushed forwards forcefully...

This sudden action of Ling Lan's made the expressions of both Tang Yu on the stage and Boss Huo below the stage pale drastically. They thought that Ling Lan was about to commit murder. Without prior agreement, they both leapt at Ling Lan, trying to stop the other's rampage.

Tang Yu was only one step away from Ling Lan, but he had only just thought of approaching when an invisible surge of Qi-Jin stopped him. Meanwhile, Boss Huo was too far away — the duration of that blink of time was not enough for him to get there in time.

A loud "boom" rang out! The entire stage shone with a radiant light and emitted an ear-splitting alarm. The majority of people could not tell what this represented, but as the referee, Tang Yu knew that this meant the force the stage had received was already close to its maximum capacity. If a little bit more force was added, the stage may collapse entirely.

At this moment, Tang Yu could no longer maintain his composure. His face was extremely pale — it should be known that the sturdiness of this stage in the combat hall was enough to withstand all damage below Domain stage. Since the stage was sounding its warning, could it be that this new cadet was already infinitely close to Domain? Or perhaps he had already arrived at that rumoured half step into Domain?

Only after the light from the stage had faded and the warning alarms had died down, could all the spectating students see the situation on the stage clearly, whereby they were all flabbergasted.

Nie Feng-ming's entire body was laid flat on the stage, his front plastered to the ground. On his face which was turned slightly to one side, both of his eyes were rolled up so the whites were showing — it could not be determined from appearance whether he was dead or alive. With his body at its centre, countless large gaping cracks had spread across the entire stage, causing the stage to seem broken and dilapidated.

It really led people to worry whether the three people still standing on the stage would collapse the stage entirely if they moved.

Boss Huo, who had already rushed onto the stage, saw Nie Feng-ming's terrible condition, and his eyes turned red. He pointed at Ling Lan angrily and questioned, "Why did you kill him?"

Ling Lan flicked her sleeves, as if brushing off some dust, and replied emotionlessly, "Don't worry, he isn't dead!"

"Not dead?" These words made Boss Huo calm down instantly from his towering rage. He quickly turned to look at Colonel Tang Yu.

At this time, Tang Yu had already rushed forwards to check on Nie Feng-ming. He probed the side of Nie Feng-ming's neck, and his initially troubled expression eased. Luckily the boy was only severely injured and not dead. Otherwise, even if he had wanted to help the New Cadet Regiment, things would not have been so easily settled.

"He's still breathing, but the bones of his entire body have been broken. He must be sent to the treatment centre immediately. It looks like Nie Feng-ming won't be able to recover fully without spending about a year and a half's worth of time." Tang Yu let Boss Huo know Nie Feng-ming's condition, and then swiftly instructed the staff to send Nie Feng-ming to the treatment centre.

Right then, Tang Yu really did not know what to say anymore. In three consecutive rounds, all six participants were sent to the treatment centre. Was this really a combat showdown or was it actually a death match? Never had any waged fight been so brutal — at the bottom of it, it was all because these freshmen, each and every one of them, were such tough nuts to crack, unwilling to admit defeat...

During the new cadet admission assessment, didn't those unholy terrors <sup>3</sup> break these new cadets' proud bones and teach them a good lesson? Colonel Tang Yu could already sense that the pride of this batch of freshmen were extraordinarily robust, not at all like students who had been tormented and shamed...

Hearing that Nie Feng-ming was ultimately fine, Boss Huo finally let out a sigh of relief. He suppressed the rage in his heart as he asked in a measured tone, "Why did you harm our team member without any reason?"

"Without any reason? I was only giving him a taste of his own medicine." Ling Lan's



cool gaze was locked onto Boss Huo, "Could you not tell what your team member was doing just now? If that move of his had landed, my brother would be in his current condition."

"Didn't you manage to save him? Since your brother is fine, why would you be so cruel?"

"And if I had not managed to save him?" Ling Lan shot back, "I will not forgive anyone who harms my brothers. No matter how powerful the other's faction is, or how formidable the other is personally."

At this point of her speech, Ling Lan's icy gaze swept out to encompass everyone watching the fights. She bit out word by word, "Right here, I want to remind everyone in the military academy, including all the major factions. If anyone dares to trouble my brothers for no reason, or harm them, I will definitely never let it rest. No matter how long it will take, I will make sure they pay for it."

Using her spiritual power, Ling Lan made her voice ring out by everyone's ear, including those within the boxes. Quite a few weaker students actually found themselves trembling, their entire bodies feeling cold...

Only Li Lanfeng's expression shifted at these words, a subdued spark flashing through his eyes. *What familiar energy! Could the other be a kindred type<sup>4</sup>?* Li Lanfeng, who had initially held very little interest in Ling Lan, instantly slotted Ling Lan into his mind. When he found an opportunity later on, he would be prepared to test the other. If they were alike, perhaps there was the possibility of a collaboration...

# Chapter 260

## Spiritual Life Coach?

Boss Huo found his breath stifled for a moment by Ling Lan's question, but fury soon followed in response to Ling Lan's arrogant words. In his extreme rage, he laughed and said, "What shameless boasting. A tiny first year actually daring to threaten us?" Where did these first year students get the gall to do this?

"Oh no, I'm just clarifying our New Cadet Regiment's principles in dealing with outsiders," responded Ling Lan calmly, "I also believe that, the other groups, including senior's Leiting Mecha Clan, will have something similar to this creed as well. We are just doing what we should."

Ling Lan was not wrong. As an organisation, in order to protect the group and the welfare of its members, there must be some action. For example, the Leiting Mecha Clan's method of doing things was even more bossy and tyrannical than what Ling Lan had said. It went to the extent where if an outsider did not want to submit to them, they would be targeted on all fronts.

However, this was all established on individual strength... an idea sparked in Boss Huo's mind. He unleashed his full aura and pressed it down on the youth opposite him, and said slowly, "Ambitious, and your words are haughty, but it still remains to be seen whether you have the corresponding level of strength to back them up. Otherwise, it's all hot air, and you will only be laughed at for biting off more than you can chew."

Right beside them, Colonel Tang Yu sensed the great force of Boss Huo's aura pressing down, and his expression could not help but shift subtly. He threw a hurried glance at the main target of this force, but found Ling Lan still standing there with his back straight, expression unchanged, and the colonel's expression eased as he let go of his worry.

Ling Lan seemed to not feel any of the pressure Boss Huo was silently heaping on her. Airily, she replied, "You can try."

Boss Huo was just about to retort to that when Colonel Tang Yu suddenly opened his mouth to interrupt, "The names of the 4th round have yet to be announced, so both of

you please leave the stage. Do not affect the continuation of the fights."

Boss Huo cast a contemplative glance at Tang Yu, and then peered searchingly at Ling Lan for a long moment before sneering and said, "I hope we'll have the chance to fight. What you suggested just now is precisely what I intend to do..." That said, he did not linger. With a dash, he left the stage, returning to Leiting's area.

The corners of Ling Lan's lips quirked at these words, revealing a very light trace of mockery. She of course knew what the other was hinting at. It was nothing more than wanting to take revenge for his team member... the two of them were destined to fight in the end anyhow; she would just wait and let things be.

Thus, Ling Lan also dashed back to her own territory. Right then, Wu Jiong approached nervously and asked in a low voice, "Boss Lan, can we really win?"

For the first time, some uncertainty actually appeared in Wu Jiong's expression. This greatly surprised Ling Lan — in her mind, Wu Jiong had always been a mentally stable and assured youth who would never lose confidence in himself.

"What are you trying to say?" Ling Lan quirked an eyebrow.

Wu Jiong averted his eyes briefly and said, "Even Qi Long lost, will I... will I be okay?"

Wu Jiong knew very well that the situation was extremely disadvantageous for the New Cadet Regiment right now. They needed to win both of the final two rounds to win this wagered fight. This meant that, regardless of which match he had to fight, he could not lose. This type of pressure was not easy to bear, and on top of that, he had just seen Qi Long, who was stronger than him by a hair, fighting so hard just to lose in the end anyway. This caused him to begin harbouring a tendril of doubt in his own abilities.

These words of Wu Jiong's made Ling Lan turn her head abruptly, her bleak gaze shooting straight at Wu Jiong.

This gaze pierced Wu Jiong's heart like a sharp blade, causing him to lower his head in shame. He knew that something had gone wrong with his mental state — behaving so disgracefully at this critical juncture, he was really letting Boss Lan down...

With a 'thwack', Ling Lan flicked a forceful finger onto Wu Jiong's forehead, causing Wu Jiong to look up and cover his forehead reflexively, his expression confused.

"Have you woken up?" asked Ling Lan.

"Ah..." Wu Jiong was gaping in bewilderment, reflexively making a sound in response. It looked like Ling Lan's finger-flick had really stunned him silly. After all, he and Ling Lan's relationship was unlike that of Ling Lan with Qi Long and the others of his team — childhood companions who had grown up together — but more of a working relationship. And Ling Lan's action just now was extremely intimate, like the way one would treat a beloved follower. This made Wu Jiong emotional and conflicted at the same time, making him unsure how he should react all of a sudden.

"Wu Jiong, frankly, your combat talent is not much weaker than Qi Long's," said Ling Lan after Wu Jiong had calmed down slightly.

"Ah...?" Once more, Wu Jiong was left stunned by Ling Lan's words. Was Boss Lan trying to console him? Mind you, he had always been suppressed by Qi Long, having never beaten the other even once. It was obvious that his talent was no match for Qi Long's.

"The reason you can't beat him, is that you are not as simple as Qi Long here," Ling Lan pointed to her own chest.

Ling Lan's words confused Wu Jiong, but Ling Lan continued to explain, "Other than combat, Qi Long's heart has nothing else. But you are different. The things you think about are many, such as your future, and the futures of the members of your team... all these distract your mind from pure combat, which is why you will never catch up to Qi Long in terms of combat."

Wu Jiong grinned wryly at these words and replied, "Qi Long has you, Boss Lan, to help him. Of course he can focus without any distractions..."

Ling Lan interrupted him to say, "No, remember when I left the academy for three years? Without my help, you still did not manage to chase up to Qi Long. Have you never considered the reason for that?"

Wu Jiong blinked, his expression troubled. For a beat, he could not understand what Ling Lan was saying, but he was after all a clever person. After turning the idea around in his mind for a while, he figured it out, and instantly chuckled bitterly, "So that's how it is. It's because Qi Long has Han Jijun, has Luo Lang, has Lin Zhong-qing, has Xie Yi..."

"Yes, Qi Long's other strength is his willingness to believe in his companions. He believes his companions will handle the other things well, so he does not have to worry, able to immerse his full heart and soul into the path of martial combat," said Ling Lan, nodding, "Qi Long understands his role in the team very well, and has always been working hard to live up to his role."

At this point, Ling Lan peered at Wu Jiong and said, "On the other hand, you, trusting only Ye Xu, have taken on the roles of almost everyone else... you have too much to worry about, so with regards to martial combat, you of course cannot match up to Qi Long."

As he listened, Wu Jiong ducked his head in shame. What Ling Lan was saying was precisely the problem with his team. Despite being very strong individually, in comparison with Ling Lan's team, his team members were all clearly much weaker in their role designations. Previously, he had always thought it was because the skills of his team members were no match for Lin Zhong-qing, Xie Yi and the others of Ling Lan's team, but now, from the looks of it, he himself was the problem.

"But, from another perspective, you should also be proud of yourself." Ling Lan's words took an abrupt turn, causing Wu Jiong to lift his head in surprise, to stare at Ling Lan in disbelief. He had already behaved so terribly... why would Boss Lan still say he should take pride in himself?

"Even though your attention had been split up among so many things, you still were not left too far behind Qi Long. Isn't that something to take pride in?" Ling Lan asked, lifting an eyebrow.

These words of Ling Lan made Wu Jiong's heart feel warm instantly — so he really was not that much worse than Qi Long!

"That is why I believe in your strength, that you will definitely win at the critical moment..." Ling Lan finally gave her answer. All of this talk was actually just to eliminate that little speck of self-doubt in Wu Jiong's heart. As the big boss of the regiment, she really did not have it easy...

Ling Lan was in fact very bothered inside. When had she also taken on the job of being the spiritual life coach of these children? Li Yingjie was one, and now Wu Jiong was another... but, upon reflection, Li Yingjie's and Wu Jiong's behaviours were more like those of a normal 16 year old teenager. Qi Long and Luo Lang were the ones who were

weird, actually submitting themselves to a round of torment on the field without any reservations.

Could it be that because she was not a normal 16 year old girl, her companions who grew up with her had also become abnormal along with her? At this thought, Ling Lan could not help but feel a bout of remorse. Of course, this feeling only lasted for a very brief moment before being thrown to the back of her mind.

In the course of one conversation, Ling Lan achieved her purpose. From his initial uncertain state, Wu Jiong had now become unbelievably confident. This also allowed Ling Lan to relax — after all, no mistakes could be made in these final two rounds.

"Boss, the opponent has submitted their name list! As expected, it's their weakest member, Chang Le <sup>1</sup>!" Little Four finally piped up from within the mindspace. This time, Leiting had submitted their name list very late, basically right at the border of the allocated 5 minutes. However, following the submission of the opponent's name list, Little Four instantly sent Wu Jiong's name over.

This was Ling Lan's instruction. She had already told Little Four that she would be fighting against that strongest Boss Huo, while the weakest Chang Le would be Wu Jiong's opponent. Thus, when the opponent's name list was revealed, Little Four had sent Wu Jiong's name over without checking in with Ling Lan again.

On Colonel Tang Yu's end, to the naked eye, it looked as if the New Cadet Regiment and the Leiting Mecha Clan had submitted their name list at the exact same time. This made the colonel raise his eyebrows, silently impressed at how unruffled the two factions were, able to wait till the very last second before submitting their name lists. He could not know that this process involved some flawlessly executed cheating by a miraculous intelligence entity.

"Leiting Mecha Clan vs New Cadet Regiment, 4th round. 4th year Chang Le against 1st year Wu Jiong!"

Following this announcement, Leiting's Lin Zhidong rapped his own head with a fist in frustration. He had initially wondered whether to let Boss Huo go up in this 4th round, but then, he was afraid that that mysterious youth who had crippled Nie Fengming in one blow would also be fighting in this round. After much thought, he decided to send out the weakest Chang Le to be sacrificed against the opponent's strongest member, but unexpectedly, the opponent was so calm, actually sending out their

regiment commander, Wu Jiong.

At this moment, Lin Zhidong already knew that this Wu Jiong was most likely just the public regiment commander of the New Cadet Regiment. The one truly in charge of the New Cadet Regiment should be that mysterious youth, because the pressure the mysterious youth exuded was much heavier than that of Wu Jiong's...

"This is good. I really want to personally teach that youth a lesson," Boss Huo suddenly spoke up from beside him, causing Lin Zhidong to jump. With that, Lin Zhidong no longer dared to reveal any more of his frustration, only nodding to show that he understood.

However, both their reactions showed that they did not look favourably upon Chang Le's chances in this match. After all, Wu Jiong was the public regiment commander of the New Cadet Regiment, so he really could not be that weak. The other three who had come out so far were all at Qi-Jin stage, so this Wu Jiong must surely be at Qi-Jin stage as well. It was just unclear whether he was in the early stages of Qi-Jin or the middle stages... meanwhile, although Chang Le was also at Qi-Jin stage, he was only at the mid-level of early stage Qi-Jin. This match, would definitely be tough to win.

# Chapter 261

## Wu Jiong's Calculation!

After taking the stage, Wu Jiong and Chang Le had their guards up. Wu Jiong shouldered the huge pressure of having to win, while Chang Le hoped to end this battle in his turn and become the great hero of Leiting.

In contrast to Lin Zhidong's and Boss Huo's uncertainty, Chang Le was extremely confident of himself as he had already reached mid-level early stage Qi-Jin, and believed that Wu Jiong was around the same level as those two new cadets who had come out earlier on, who had just entered first-level early stage Qi-Jin. He was not convinced that there would be new cadets stronger than him, and Qi Long, the one who came out during the third match, was probably the rumoured aberrant as he was extremely strong.

Chang Le had overlooked Ling Lan's existence at this moment. He was under the impression that Ling Lan could severely injure Nie Feng-ming in one strike only because Nie Feng-ming and Qi Long had been in a situation where both sides had suffered serious injuries, so Nie Feng-ming had been defenceless. It had to be said that having a huge discrepancy between their strength made one unable to see the actual facts, and Chang Le was currently in such a state.

When Chang Le saw Wu Jiong doing a high-level military physical defensive hand gesture when he took the stage, he was instantly delighted.

There were numerous top-class combat arts in the military academy, one of which was the top-class combat art used by the military. When Chang Le had advanced into Qi-Jin, the physical skill he had selected to match his upgrade was that one. As such, seeing that Wu Jiong was also using that same set of military physical skills, he was overjoyed. When using the same series of physical skill, the higher levels countered the lower levels. With that, Chang Le was even more convinced that victory was in his grasp.

He who was extremely confident did not think of probing his opponent, instead using a powerful finishing blow from the military physical skill right off the bat.



Witnessing the situation, Wu Jiong's eyes gleamed. Perhaps the opponent's attack speed was extremely fast and he could not dodge, as Wu Jiong merely braced himself by making a cross with his arms to defend and intercept the opponent's attack!

"Bang!" A loud sound resounded and Wu Jiong was knocked back hard, his feet sliding across the ground, marking it with two streaks. Meanwhile, Chang Le's body simply shook before he steadied himself.

Solely based on this encounter, it seemed like Wu Jiong's strength was a notch lower compared to his, and Chang Le was heartened by this. He did not even think it through before he continued attacking, his foot kicking out forcefully.

Wu Jiong did not choose to receive the attack but instead dodged it with a slide.

This action reaffirmed Chang Le's belief that the other party was weaker, thus not daring to receive his attack directly. Before he went up on stage, Boss Huo had reminded him to exercise caution and thoroughly understand the opponent's strength before making a move. Currently, Chang Le whose whole head was filled with grand dreams of being a hero had tossed Boss Huo's warning to the back of his mind. In addition, burning up with passion, he had long forgotten the need to retain thirty percent of his strength for defence as he unleashed all of his strength into his attacks against the opponent.

He did not notice that, despite the fact that Wu Jiong had been sidestepping from the beginning and seemed like a small boat struggling amidst a surging gale, his face was abnormally calm. Every dodge of his was extremely efficient without being sloppy, and those with keen eyesight could see that Wu Jiong seemed to have a well-thought-out plan with every dodge and clearly understood his opponent's path of attack.

"No good, Chang Le's too impulsive, and I'm afraid he's fallen into the opponent's stratagem." Boss Huo who was seated below and observing the match furrowed his brow, involuntarily looking towards Ling Lan seated in the New Cadet Regiment's area with his hands crossed, his expression calm, seemingly having a card up his sleeve.

Apparently sensing Boss Huo's line of sight, Ling Lan coldly met his gaze, and then, the corner of her mouth raised slightly, as if saying victory belonged to them...

Boss Huo felt stifled. Although he had had a premonition of Chang Le having a difficult fight, Boss Huo did not wish to lose...

"You're stronger than your opponent and as long as you remember to go steady and strike hard without advancing prematurely, we can win this match." Wu Jiong who was dodging on the stage suddenly recalled the words Ling Lan had told him before he took the stage, and endless admiration welled up in his heart.

After receiving an attack from the opponent, Wu Jiong was aware that the opponent was inferior to him by a notch. Initially, he could have chosen to attack head-on and fight a fierce battle, and defeat his opponent that way, but Wu Jiong did not wish to do so.

After three consecutive bitter and desperate battles, Wu Jiong wanted to gain a complete and overwhelming victory to prove the might of their New Cadet Regiment. Therefore, he had revealed weakness on purpose, so that the opponent would have the mistaken impression that his strength was weaker, and abandon defence to focus fully on offence...

Of course, there was another reason why Wu Jiong had set this up. — he knew the opponent had also learned the top-class military use combat arts. If it had been any other combat move, he would not have done so. After all, deliberately showing weakness might very well lead to shooting oneself in the foot, allowing the opponent to seize the flow of the match and put him in a passive position. Just like during the first battle Luo Lang fought, it was the opponent's mocking that allowed Luo Lang to seize the opportunity and gain upper hand.

However, it just so happened that the opponent had learned the top-class military combat move, and who was Wu Jiong? He was a direct descendant of a military elite family, the Wu family, a genuine N-generation military family descendant. In addition, the inherited martial arts in the family was the physical skill used by the military, and when he had advanced in Qi-Jin levels it had caused a sensation in Wu family because he was the youngest descendant in the family who had advanced. Even the family head was alerted, who then directly instructed him in the Wu family's exclusive secret moves.

These combat moves had been researched and tempered through N-generations of Wu family masters, assimilating the best traits of the top-class military combat moves while harmonizing them with other top combat moves. It was inevitable to be extremely familiar with various types of military physical skills while learning their family's secret moves, and there were even many moves that specifically countered those of the military physical skill set, including the top-class military combat moves.

This was also the reason Wu Jiong had fearlessly devised this plan. He was familiar with the opponent's moves and even during the first few attacks, killing moves aimed to counter them had directly surfaced in Wu Jiong's mind. However, Wu Jiong believed that the opportune timing had yet to arrive, so he had endured silently until now...

But now, Wu Jiong considered that timing to have arrived. The opponent had once again struck out with both fists — this was a military top-class combat move called the Twin Dragon Strike. The scary part of this attack was that as long as both hands were to simultaneously make contact with the opponent's body, a Qi-Jin loop would appear between the fists, directly destroying the opponent's internal organs, which made this one of the most powerful killing moves of the military top-level combat arts.

Yet, there was a fatal weakness in this attack, and that was the user's chest would be completely exposed, and when both fists struck out, the move had to be completely executed without any leeway for retreat. Thus, as long as he pinpointed a weak spot, the opponent would not have time to change moves even if he wanted to save himself. Therefore, Wu Jiong believed that his opportunity had arrived...

Wu Jiong suddenly came to a stop and no longer dodging, his hands abruptly came together, while both his arms thrust forwards to place him between Chang Le's fists. With a loud shout, his originally joined hands suddenly separated, while his arms spread open to push out forcefully against the opponent's forearms...

Only after both of the opponent's fists had brushed past his body, did Wu Jiong retract his arms and used both fists to strike fiercely at the opponent's chest — Twin Dragon Strike Remake! This was the Wu family's secret move, a revised first-rate combat move of Twin Dragon Strike. This secret move allowed offence and defence in one move, counteracting the weak point of the original Twin Dragon Strike of being unable to defend!

Chang Le received a direct blow from Wu Jiong and crashed heavily to the ground with a thud, sliding out several meters before spitting out a jet of blood...

This unexpected scene shocked everyone, because Chang Le had held the upper hand all along, so they had not expected the situation to suddenly change, for Wu Jiong to actually knock down the opponent with one move.

Chang Le collapsed onto the ground, covering his chest, but was unable to contain the fresh blood in this mouth. He then asked painfully, "Why do you know this move...?"

Familiar with the military combat art, he naturally understood that the move the opponent had executed was from the same series.

Wu Jiong coldly replied, "As a student of the military combat arts, you should know which family has the strongest military combat arts."

Chang Le recalled something, and his complexion turned deathly pale. "The Wu family. So you're from that Wu family... I am too unlucky." That said, he fainted and was thoroughly unconscious. Wu Jiong had pulled his punches and only injured his heart instead of completely destroying it. Otherwise, Chang Le would not even have had the opportunity to speak with him...

Unlucky? Was it truly just bad luck? A hint of disdain was revealed on Wu Jiong's lips and he felt ashamed for actually losing confidence earlier on. Luckily, Boss Lan had made him realize in time that he was strong enough...

At this moment, Colonel Tang Yu had gone up to examine Chang Le's condition, and discovering that the youth's injuries were severe, he hastily called out for staff members to send Chang Le to the treatment centre. Subsequently, he announced the New Cadet Regiment the victor for this match, bringing the overall score to 2-2, with both teams back at the starting line once again.

Everyone's attention was now on the last match. They were all looking forward to whether Boss Huo, the number one in combat arts, would truly appear on stage...

Wu Jiong coolly walked off the stage. Out of the four matches, he was the only representative who was uninjured. His performance was sufficient to prove that he was absolutely suitable to be the public regiment commander of the New Cadet Regiment.

"You've done well." Spotting Wu Jiong walking over, Ling Lan was generous with her praise.

A hint of a smile appeared on Wu Jiong's originally stony face at the praise. He recovered his senses very quickly, however, and mentally shook his head. He had not expected to be so happy with just one sentence from Ling Lan — he was even happier than when he had received his father's acknowledgment...

This time, Little Four immediately submitted Ling Lan's name without waiting for the opponent to publish their list, as regardless of who came out, Boss was going to fight

the last battle anyway.

The five-minute intermission finally elapsed, and Tang Yu loudly announced on the platform, "New Cadet Regiment Vs Leiting Mecha Clan, 1st year Ling Lan against 5th year Huo Zhenyu."

Following the announcement, enthusiastic shouts sounded from the audience. Reason being, Huo Zhenyu was the Military Academy's number one in physical skill combat, as well as being the Leiting Mecha Clan's previous leader. His reputation was not inferior to Thunder King Qiao Ting's, and it was only during the fourth year, after passing the position to Qiao Ting, that his prestige had declined. Even so, witnessing Huo Zhenyu actually standing up on the stage, the older students who had been looking forward to seeing him fight could no longer contain their excitement as they cheered loudly.

"He's really going to fight. Damn, seems like Leiting is determined to win against the New Cadet Regiment." The various leaders of the major forces sighed.

After witnessing Huo Zhenyu emerge on the stage previously, they had had a premonition that he might be fighting. However, they had still held on to a trace of hope, wishing that he would consider his status as the top rank in combat skills and not rashly take the stage.

# Chapter 262

## The Reactions of the Various Factions!

Yet, reality crushed the hopes of the various faction leaders. This indicated that they were unlikely to obtain even the slightest share of this big fish that was the New Cadet Regiment. They could not help but secretly sigh in regret. If they had known that the new cadets this year were so outstanding, they would have long taken action instead of watching from the sidelines and allowing Leiting to take possession of this decisive opportunity right now.

The various leaders could already envision the future. After Leiting swallowed the entire New Cadet Regiment, their influence would definitely expand once again. With that, the position of the number one faction in the Military Academy would not be changing in the slightest for several years, firmly belonging to the Leiting Mecha Clan.

Putting aside the bitterness and regret of the major factions, the senior students observing the fight believed that the Leiting Mecha Clan would inevitably obtain victory in this last match without any suspense. While everyone was in shock and excitement due to Huo Zhenyu's appearance, the new cadets' reactions caused the surrounding people to raise their eyebrows, to the extent that those senior students believed that the new cadets had limited outlook and experience, not knowing the immensity of heaven and earth.

It turned out that, after beholding Ling Lan, the powerhouse of their hearts, ascending the stage, the new cadets were unable to restrain their excitement as they stood up in succession, raising their arms and shouting, "Boss Lan will certainly win!"

That's right, in the hearts of every member of the New Cadet Regiment, especially students from Central Scout Academy, Boss Lan who had guided them in winning the grand armed melee and taking control of the spacecraft would never be defeated.

This display of the New Cadet Regiment caused the others to be secretly shocked at the position Boss Lan held in the members' hearts. Previously having considered them to already be in their grasp, Lin Zhidong's expression changed subtly upon witnessing this scene as he recalled Boss Huo's warning. He began having misgivings towards Ling Lan while pondering on methods to diminish Ling Lan's prestige among the new

cadets after taking in the New Cadet Regiment.

At this moment, no matter how slow-witted the various leaders of each faction were, they were now clear about the devil who had caused Zhang Jing-an to be so apprehensive.

In Wuji's cabin, Han Yu's face suddenly darkened after hearing the fanatic shouts from the new cadets. "Apparently, the aberrant Zhang Jing-an mentioned should be this person." Besides him, there should be no one else who could achieve this.

Han Yu's gaze was shadowed as he looked at that stern, lean youth on the stage, and he felt a complicated emotion silently emerge within him. Thinking back on the time when they themselves had entered the Academy, even though they were proud and arrogant, they had had no option but to join the Wuji faction which belonged to their galaxy as they were under pressure from all sides.

Even so, as 1st-year cadets, they had always been ordered about and lectured by the older cadets with seniority and no one would help them. They could only clamp down their tails and endure the toughest first year, and then work their utmost hardest to increase their strength later on. After that, he had expended great effort to climb up the hierarchy, fighting and scheming, to finally become one of the leaders of Wuji Mecha Clan.

Han Yu was simply unwilling to recall how much hardship he had endured during that time. He had originally thought that this was an inevitable route every cadet had to walk without exception, as even the formidable Thunder King, Qiao Ting, had walked that same path.

Yet against everyone's expectations, the new cadets this year had taken an unprecedented path. To avoid being bullied and enslaved, they had established a faction belonging to them alone that was not weaker than the other influential powers almost immediately after entering the military academy. Then, soon after, they had accepted Leiting's challenge in a high profile manner, causing the new cadets to become the focus of the entire academy. And at present, they were tied against Leiting, proving their strength.

Despite all this, Han Yu did not believe the new cadets would be the final victors. Still, based on their performance on the stage, the senior members of Leiting would certainly refrain from provoking them even if they joined the Leiting Mecha Clan. It

was apt to say that, in the military academy, the strong were respected, and honour was obtained through strength.

Wei Ji heard Han Yu's words and quietly sighed. "Seems like we've belittled this aberrant. It's no wonder Zhang Jing-an regarded him with importance while simultaneously avoiding him."

Since the third contestant from the New Cadet Regiment was already at mid-level intermediate stage Qi-Jin, it was reckoned that Ling Lan should be at mid-level advanced stage Qi-Jin at worst. Even he had to look up to this realm as his physical skills had only entered the early stages of Qi-Jin, because they had concentrated on mecha piloting all these years...

Wei Ji felt lingering fear just thinking about it — the strength of new cadets this year had exceeded his expectations. Fortunately, he had not provoked them on impulse from the start, as Wuji did not have a solid foundation like Leiting. If they were to have fought on the stage, the outcome of the battle would have been hard to say.

Zhao Jun heard them, but he was unconvinced. He sneered and said, "Being good at physical combat doesn't mean he'll also be outstanding as a mecha operator..." That dismissive look of his caused Han Yu and Wei Ji to involuntarily purse their lips. However, they were aware that Zhao Jun was a frank and outspoken person, so they did not refute his words.

Having heard what was said, Li Lanfeng smiled. "Zhao Jun, you shouldn't speak this way. A person who performs well in battles won't be too inferior as a mecha operator." A person with robust physique would often possess a slight advantage in mecha piloting. This was also the reason why the military academy had emphasized training up their physiques as it was unlikely for the majority of experts to have bad physiques.

"Hmph, that might not be true. Isn't Zhang Jing-an a mecha cripple?" When Zhang Jing-an had entered the military academy, he was the only new cadet who reached Qi-Jin stage and was top-ranked among the new cadets. Unfortunately, after starting to learn Mecha Piloting from the second year, the other cadets had caught up with him, and he was currently on the verge of being lost in the vast sea of cadets. His figure was nowhere to be seen in the top fifty, and he had become a laughingstock between the upper echelons of the various large factions...

If not for the fact that the Doha Central Academy faction that Zhang Jing-an belonged



to had a strong foundation, just based on his strength, they might not have been able to maintain the ranking of being the military academy's number four faction.

Hearing Zhao Jun mention Zhang Jing-an, everyone was silent as this was a fact that could not be refuted. In reality, there were many cases similar to Zhang Jing-an's, of students having powerful physical skills but not excelling in mecha piloting.

At this moment, seated in a certain area among the New Cadet Regiment, Gao Jinyun spoke to a few people seated beside him. "Boss Lan is about to appear on stage. You all had better watch attentively."

One of the people he was speaking to asked nervously, "I heard that the opponent is the top-rank in combat skills. No matter how powerful Boss Lan is, he won't be able to win against the opponent, right?"

"Yeah! Although Boss Lan has capability and charisma, Leiting is ultimately the number one faction. Is it really appropriate to go against them so early?" Another person voiced this question. In reality, he was not optimistic about how the New Cadet Regiment's battle would turn out this time; if Gao Jinyun had not warned him in advance not to try anything, he might have already followed the other team leaders and considered alternative options.

Hearing what they had to say, Gao Jinyun sneered. "I specially reminded you all because of our relationship. Don't be short-sighted like the others and collude with outsiders when the outcome has yet to be revealed. Furthermore, even if Boss Lan were to lose, I'd still advise you all to follow Boss Lan... Don't foolishly think you would become a true member of Leiting after joining them."

Gao Jinyun's words caused the others to become wordless and silent. If they truly joined Leiting, could Boss Lan keep the New Cadet Regiment from disbanding? Leiting would never allow such a situation to happen, and the first person to be suppressed was most likely to be Boss Lan.

"Do you think anyone can suppress a person like Boss Lan?" Gao Jinyun's question caused everyone to shiver. Would that chilly and domineering Boss Lan acknowledge allegiance to another? Oh my god, please forgive their inability to imagine that.

Gao Jinyun sneered, "Leiting wants to devour the entire New Cadet Regiment but that would depend on whether they have the ability."

Ever since the spaceship incident, Gao Jinyun had had an inexplicable trust towards Ling Lan. While many hearts wavered, he resolutely believed that Ling Lan would never become a subordinate to another faction. In his heart, no one could become boss of Boss Lan.

"Besides, would Boss Lan lose?" Gao Jinyun concealed this sentence deep in his heart and did not say it out loud.

He was not convinced that the Boss Lan who could calmly confront the captain of the spaceship and not be at a disadvantage would lose to a mere academy cadet. Even if that cadet was in their 5th year or was about to enter the military as a combat expert. Compared to the captain who had climbed out from a sea of blood, the force of presence of a cadet was obviously weaker and completely incomparable.

These leaders had been roped in by him into the New Cadet Regiment, and thus, he had to live up to his responsibility towards Boss Lan and prevent the others from betraying him.

Perhaps Gao Jinyun's words had proved effective, for a few of the originally hesitant leaders became determined. Regardless of the result, they decided they would follow alongside Boss Lan. In any case, Boss Lan was similar to them — as new cadets of the same enrolment year, it was more likely that he would look after them. Without a doubt, this was a better choice compared to the other factions.

Hearing them say that they would not turn traitor, Gao Jinyun immediately relaxed and settled down quietly to watch Boss Lan's match. Currently, he was unaware that Ling Lan already had intentions to seize this chance to clear out those opportunistic cadets who were clearly only trying to benefit from the regiment.

Of course, these actions of his were not meaningless, because he settled the hearts of these small team members so they did not betray the New Cadet Regiment, which led the Central Academy students to truly acknowledge those students who came from the other Doha scout academies. This built a great foundation for Ling Lan to genuinely become the king of the new cadets, and it could truly be said to be an unintended side benefit...

By this time, Ling Lan and Huo Zhenyu had moved onto the elevated stage. The two of them did not make any preparations for battle; they were merely standing casually on their respective sides. It was as if they were not participating in the final decisive

match, but instead taking a stroll.

However, as the referee, Colonel Tang Yu nodded mentally in approval at the situation. Although both fighters seemed relaxed, their casual stances were, in fact, without any openings. Tang Yu believed that, as long as there was the slightest sign of movement, they could instantly enter a battle state. This was the result of assimilating combat into their basic instincts, and it could be seen that their combat realm had already exceeded that of every cadet here.

Right then, no matter how unperturbed Tang Yu was, he could not help but shoot a glance at Ling Lan while wondering to himself, where exactly had this aberrant come from...?

Colonel Tang Yu quickly sorted out his thoughts, and without asking if the two fighters were prepared, he waved his hands and announced loudly, "The match begins!" With their capabilities, it did not matter if they were prepared or not, so Tang Yu would not ask unnecessary questions.

Following Tang Yu's declaration, silence fell around the stage as everyone's attention became focused on the two combatants.

# Chapter 263

## Oppressive Aura!

Although Colonel Tang Yu had announced the commencement of the match, Ling Lan and Huo Zhenyu seemed not to have heard it, not moving in the slightest.

Ling Lan's bearing was grave and stern, her gaze cold with both hands behind her back while she stood to one side. Huo Zhenyu's eyes were half-lidded as he quietly stood on the other side with a calm expression, seemingly not minding who his opponent was, as if the confrontation during the third match had not happened...

Just like that, one cold and the other calm, they stood without moving as they allowed time to pass. One minute elapsed, two minutes elapsed, three minutes elapsed... Along with the passing of time, some noise could be heard in the combat hall. In particular, some of the older students were baffled as to why Huo Zhenyu had not chosen to attack after such a long time.

They believed that, as the number one combatant of the Military Academy, Huo Zhenyu could certainly dispose of the opponent with no difficulty, so they were puzzled by his inactivity for such a long period of time.

They were unaware that it was not Huo Zhenyu who did not want to take action, but rather, he did not have the chance to do so. During these three minutes, he had been constantly searching for an opening in the opponent, but regardless of how hard he searched, he couldn't find a window of opportunity. Even though there had been a few faintly discernible chances, they had been rejected by him as they had made him feel an indescribable sense of danger.

Huo Zhenyu was not a rash person, so he had chosen to continue waiting, and with this wait, the time had exceeded three minutes...

' *To not have the slightest opening...* ' Huo Zhenyu could not help but smile bitterly. At this moment, he was secretly guarded against Ling Lan, the reason being that an opponent whom he could not find an opening in could not be weak.

However, should he continue waiting? Huo Zhenyu immediately rejected this thought.

According to the opponent's ability, he would not reveal any fatal opening even if he waited. Therefore, Huo Zhenyu changed his mind and decided to take the initiative to force an opening.

Hence, Huo Zhenyu's aura burst out from his body and bore down on Ling Lan like a wave.

In reality, whether a combatant had reached late-stage Qi-Jin or not would depend on whether he had grasped control over his own aura. That was to say, a combatant of late stage Qi-Jin could release their own aura to oppress the opponent, causing the opponent to be unable to display one hundred percent of their fighting capability. After reaching late stage Qi-Jin, there was no possibility of losing when facing an opponent of weaker strength.

Of course, there was another reason Huo Zhenyu had activated his oppressive aura, and that was to find out the opponent's true strength, for using his oppressive aura was a good method for probing.

Ling Lan and Huo Zhenyu were at a deadlock for three minutes, each side only executing a few baiting moves during that period. However, Huo Zhenyu had not been tempted and Ling Lan could not help but silently acknowledge that the opponent was truly an experienced, expert fighter, able to see through her intentions.

That's right, the reason why Ling Lan did not take the initiative was that she could not find an opening in the opponent's defence, and even if she had attacked, it would have been useless as it would be easily dodged. However, she wanted to defeat the opponent in one move and show the might of the New Cadet Regiment, preventing others from daring to provoke them rashly...

Ling Lan wanted to kill the chicken to warn the monkey, and sadly, Huo Zhenyu had become the chicken. Although this chicken might be a terrifying fighting chicken, it would not change the initial intention Ling Lan had when she accepted the fight from the start.

Of course, based on Ling Lan's strength, she could directly activate her ability and temporarily lock down the opponent's movements for an extremely short time, accomplishing a one-strike defeat. However, as someone who liked to hold back, Ling Lan was unwilling to reveal all her cards, which was why Ling Lan wanted to accomplish this magnificent feat while concealing her strength.

Ling Lan had been pondering her next move, when she suddenly sensed the opponent's oppressive aura pressing towards her. Ling Lan's heart thumped. ' *As expected , he's at peak level late stage Qi-Jin... If it was me three years ago, it would definitely have been a hard battle. However, right now...* '

Thanks to instructor Number Five borrowing Ling Lan's body, she had been able to directly breakthrough from peak level late stage Qi-Jin to optimal peak. In addition, her body had memories of Domain, allowing her to get a glimpse of the mystery of Domain.

Although she was unable to officially advance to Domain stage due to various reasons, she had indeed entered the legendary half-step to Domain stage!

With the ability to activate her domain, although the period of time was absurdly short, this allowed Ling Lan to become an unequalled ultra-expert below the Domain stage.

The moment the opponent used his oppressive aura, Ling Lan knew his intentions. The corner of her lips curled up slightly, but she revealed a grim expression, and her stance which had been without any openings slowly broke down...

"A chance!" Huo Zhenyu's expression brightened and his figure flashed, appearing before Ling Lan in the blink of an eye. Raising his right hand he had prepared beforehand, he immediately thrust out a strong and powerful fist.

"It's here, Boss Huo has attacked." The situation on the stage could be seen clearly and when Huo Zhenyu moved, everyone who was awaiting a fight shouted. Nonetheless, both the combatants' fists had already collided against each other on stage by the time the spectators shouted.

"Good move!" Ling Lan had made a fist and faced his attack directly without fear. She had long waited for this attack and with her strength, she had nothing to fear.

In fact, Ling Lan had progressed in this type of powerful and overbearing style which, according to Instructor Number Nine, was not a route a female should take. Unfortunately, the majority of the instructors who instructed her were males and in particular, the overbearing instructor Number One.

Even if Number Nine was discontented, she dared not express her objections outright, only choosing instead to instruct Ling Lan in as many techniques that trained her

flexibility as she could, hoping Ling Lan would not end up becoming a rough, masculine female brute.

"Bang", a muffled sound echoed! Ling Lan's and Huo Zhenyu's fists accurately counterbalanced each other, and even though the resulting sound seemed as if they had not exerted a great amount of strength, the edge of the elevated stage produced a brilliant light. This indicated that the entire stage had been completely saturated with the Qi-Jin released by the both of them, and was infinitely close to its critical point.

On the ground surface of the arena, with their position as the centre, countless cracks expanded outward. From that, the force both of them endured could be seen.

After remaining in a deadlock for several seconds, both of them suddenly sprang apart. Ling Lan retreated seven to eight steps before standing firm and it was the same for Huo Zhenyu. Both of them seemed to be evenly matched but there was still some difference between them — Ling Lan wore a cold expression as before, whereas Huo Zhenyu's expression was fluctuating between red then white. And then, a trace of blood could be seen trickling down from the corner of his mouth.

This scene caused all the spectators to go into an uproar and in the Leiting area, everyone's expression changed, especially Lin Zhidong's. His face had collapsed entirely on itself into an unsightly expression.

"How could this be?!" Not only were the senior cadets who were spectating the match from below the arena in disbelief, even the leaders of various factions in each cabin had reacted in unison as if by a non-existent prior agreement, crying out in surprise, unable to believe the scene they had witnessed.

Regardless of how shocked those senior cadets were, the cadets of the New Cadet Regiment leapt up and cheered upon witnessing this scene. As expected, no one can defeat Boss Lan!

Looking at the New Cadet Regiment clapping in celebration, the people from Leiting seemed somewhat depressed and silent. Many of them could only do their best in comforting themselves that their Boss Huo might have underestimated the enemy and did not use his full strength in that attack, and thus, the opponent had grasped the opportunity... They could only secretly cheer for their Boss Huo, hoping his next move would teach the opponent a lesson and prove Boss Huo's strength, diminishing the morale of these new cadets while he was at it.

Regardless of what others thought, on the stage, Huo Zhenyu was currently astounded. He originally had ample confidence in his strength and believed that even the teachers in the academy might not be stronger than him in terms of physical combat. However, at this moment, a new cadet had caused him to feel inferior — a punch he exerted all his strength to throw had been easily received by the opponent. It was to the extent that during the previous contest between their Qi-Jin, he had been at a disadvantage. Could it be that the opponent's realm was higher than his?

"Hey, do you still want to fight?" Ling Lan's chilly voice echoed in Huo Zhenyu's ears, causing cold sweat to emerge on his body. He had been so shocked by that last encounter that he had actually forgotten he was currently in a battle. If the opponent had not reminded him and had instead chosen to mount a surprise attack, he might have already fallen victim to an attack. If he had been injured as a result, then this battle would truly become hard to fight.

Tang Yu looked at Ling Lan in astonishment. That had been a good opportunity for a surprise attack and he had assumed Ling Lan would not have let this chance slip by. But contrary to his expectations, Ling Lan had shaken his opponent out of his stupor. Was he abiding by the martial arts' principles of fairness? Tang Yu could not help but furrow his brow, because this was not a desirable mindset on a battlefield.

Nevertheless, Tang Yu relaxed his frown very soon and broke into laughter. All in all, Ling Lan was only a new cadet who had just entered the Military Academy and had never been on a battlefield, so naturally, he did not know that there was no so-called principle of fairness there. Only those who survived were the true victors, and perhaps he would understand the correct way of handling matters after going out on a battlefield.

Ling Lan had thought of mounting a surprise attack, but if she were to defeat the opponent this way, the people from Leiting would have believed that she was merely lucky and had not defeated her opponent by true ability. This outcome was not what she wanted, so she had spoken up to alert Huo Zhenyu with seemingly good intentions.

"Are you prepared? I'll be attacking next," Ling Lan spoke seriously.

Huo Zhenyu smiled wryly and nodded. Since he had received the opponent's favour of warning him beforehand, he had no choice but to receive the opponent's attack. As the opponent was willing to face him with fair-mindedness, he did not want to be belittled by him.



Seeing his reaction, Ling Lan's expression brightened faintly and she continued, "This attack is my strongest killing move. Be prepared!"

These words caused both Tang Yu and Huo Zhenyu who were on stage to be at a loss. Should they criticize the other's straightforwardness or remind him not to be too frank?

Currently, both of them did not expect that Ling Lan's intentions of saying these words were in hopes of Huo Zhenyu not evading her attack. Her seemingly overly frank sentences were actually a trap intended to leave Huo Zhenyu with no room to back off, yet still making him believe it was his own choice.

At this moment, Ling Lan could not help but smirk. Her reminder had actually obtained her her opponent's appreciation, resulting in the opponent having no choice but to receive her attack head-on. This was absolutely a pleasant surprise that had saved her a lot of trouble.

Ling Lan took a deep breath, and took a slight step forward as her right fist punched out softly.

This punch looked as light as a feather, but Ling Lan knew she had used One-Inch Punch with it. However, the opponent's bearing had made Ling Lan reluctant to be too extreme, so she had only used three parts of her strength in the One-Inch Punch.

# Chapter 264

## The Final Victors!

Huo Zhenyu did not let his guard down just because Ling Lan's punch seemed feather-light as he had already suffered a loss from the previous attack, so he was even more cautious this time. In addition, Ling Lan's warning had given him sufficient time for preparation, so instead of considering it as Ling Lan taking the initiative to attack, it would be better called a mutual attack.

Reason being, Huo Zhenyu, who had prepared in advance, had chosen to attack to defend and directly used his strongest attack to confront Ling Lan's punch.

When experts exchanged blows, they did not require hundreds or even over thousands of blows like those in the lower realms — very often, one or two moves could determine the victor. Huo Zhenyu understood this and believed the opponent did too. Therefore, this move of the opponent was definitely not as simple as it seemed and was instead an earth-shaking punch.

Huo Zhenyu naturally would not hold back anymore — letting his Qi sink into his dantian <sup>1</sup>, he shouted: "Ultimate Overlord Punch!"

Following his shout, Huo Zhenyu's right hand clenched into a fist and moved fiercely to clash against Ling Lan's.

This move completely reflected Huo Zhenyu's style — vigorous, bold and powerful. Before his fist met with Ling Lan's, the explosive sound of his punch tearing through the air caused the expressions of the many spectators to change. Even though they were not directly facing this attack, they could feel the terrifying power it contained.

Ling Lan's countenance changed faintly and she suddenly increased the strength in her punch from 70 to 90 percent. Only such a terrifying and overbearing punch was befitting of someone who had the identity of the military academy's number one combatant. A hint of seriousness emerged in Ling Lan's thoughts as she did not dare to belittle the opponent.

With a bang, the two powerful fists collided and Ling Lan could sense that the

opponent's strength was very solid, and he was absolutely not someone she could defeat by using either just the one or two parts of her strength behind the One-Inch Punch.

The moment Huo Zhenyu came into contact with Ling Lan's fist, he felt a force similar to roaring waves transmitted through his fist. Although it was powerful, it was still within the scope he could withstand. However, before he was able to relax, he sensed another new force overlaying on the original attack surging towards him once again.

Huo Zhenyu's expression subtly changed as he groaned and frantically circulated his inner Qi-Jin to withstand the immense overlaying force once again. The strong point of this Ultimate Overlord Punch was that, before exceeding his limits, he could resist the opponent's attack no matter how powerful it was.

At this moment, Huo Zhenyu rejoiced at his initial decision to use his most powerful move instead of another finishing blow. Otherwise, the sudden addition of this overlaying power would have injured him.

However, Huo Zhenyu was only at ease for a few breaths' time, as very soon, he felt another new force emerging, which was once again overlaid on the original force, nearly overcoming him. Could it be that he was about to lose?

"No!" Unwilling to be defeated, Huo Zhenyu looked up to the skies and howled wildly. His eyes were wide open and filled with fury, his face thoroughly red. At the same time, his entire right hand suddenly bulged...

With a tearing sound, Huo Zhenyu's right sleeve became torn as pieces of cloth fell onto the ground one by one, revealing a sturdy arm with bulging muscles and veins that swelled up.

In order to resist Ling Lan's third wave of One-Inch Punch, Huo Zhenyu had utilized the extreme limit of his Ultimate Overlord Punch. He sincerely hoped that this was the opponent's last attack, or else he would be meeting his defeat.

A light flickered in Ling Lan's eyes and her originally fair complexion flushed red. She let out a grunt, and using third wave of One-Inch Punch which was about to disappear as a foundation, another, fourth layer of force emerged out of nowhere...

The force behind this attack was too powerful, encompassing the accumulated force of the previous three waves. When Huo Zhenyu sensed the fourth wave incoming, his

complexion suddenly paled because the energy in his body was already being used to the extreme limit and he did not have any excess energy to withstand this fourth strike...

Several squelching pops rang out, and the skin on Huo Zhenyu's arms suddenly split open like a sieve with countless holes, and the sounds of bones cracking could also be heard as blood spurted out from various sections of his arm.

Huo Zhenyu's arm had been crippled because of this fourth strike, but the attack did not stop here; shortly afterwards, Huo Zhenyu was sent flying into the air as a mouthful of fresh blood sprayed out from his mouth with a spitting sound.

Seeing this, Ling Lan withdrew her fist and her brows furrowed as the red flush on her face faded and turned pale in an instant. Apparently, she had lacked the capacity for a fourth One-Inch Punch but had forcefully executed it anyway and caused a backlash, thus suffering from a slight internal injury.

This time around, Ling Lan had learnt a lesson, that she should not belittle any opponent when duelling and should go all-out regardless of who the opponent was. Otherwise, it would be very easy for the opponent to overturn the match.

"Since when have I become so conceited and complacent?" Ling Lan could not help but scorn herself. Her originally prudent personality had been progressively disappearing ever since she found out that her father Ling Xiao was not dead — this was not an ideal situation.

Seems like it was not a good thing to have a solid backing! Ling Lan decided to go on as before and act as if Ling Xiao had been "sacrificed" as this would be more beneficial for her growth.

On her end, Ling Lan was self-analysing her own mentality, deciding to rely on herself to continue growing in the future. Meanwhile, Huo Zhenyu had spat out a mouthful of blood in mid-air, allowing him to breathe easier. He then flipped over and landed on the ground, but as his inner Qi-Jin had been depleted completely, he did not manage stand firm after landing and retreated three to four steps in succession before stabilizing himself.

All the cadets watching the match surged to their feet in a stupefied uproar. They had not expected that the powerful Boss Huo could not even withstand a punch from the

opponent. Everyone felt that their worldview had been overturned, thinking, who the hell was this mysterious young man? To actually be able to defeat the number one combatant of the military academy when he had just entered the academy?

Huo Zhenyu raised his head with great difficulty and looked at the slender young man who had a calm expression as before. If not for his firm will, he most likely would not have been able to remain standing.

Seeing Ling Lan retract his right hand, Huo Zhenyu noticed that the opponent's arms appeared to be trembling uncontrollably. It could be seen that the opponent using such a powerful finishing blow was not without any repercussions, and this comforted him a little. At the very least, the opponent was not completely invulnerable.

If the opponent had not been injured in the slightest... Huo Zhenyu could not help but smile bitterly on the inside. He believed that his confidence would have been directly shattered by the opponent, and then he would have become doubtful of himself, wondering whether the five years of bitter training he had spent had been a mere joke...

Even so, his confidence had still suffered a blow and was on the verge of crumbling apart. Huo Zhenyu was aware that in order to build up his confidence once again and forget the traumatic experience the opponent had brought him, he would perhaps have to spend a very long period of time recuperating.

At this moment, Colonel Tang Yu looked towards Huo Zhenyu and asked loudly, "Huo Zhenyu, can you continue fighting?" Perhaps the spectators were unable to clearly tell Huo Zhenyu's condition, but as the closest observer, Colonel Tang Yu was clear that Huo Zhenyu was already reaching his limits and would not be able to continue battling for long.

Having heard what was said, Huo Zhenyu smiled bitterly. He straightforwardly raised his hands and said, "Referee, I admit my loss for this match." His strongest move had been defeated and his body was near to falling apart, so he did not know what he could use to continue fighting.

In a serious tone, Ling Lan said, "Many thanks!"

What Ling Lan said was not a conventional greeting or words just for show. She was genuinely thankful that Huo Zhenyu's full-strength attack had allowed her to realize

the problem with her mentality, and this was more important than winning the match. If she had not discovered this and waited until the day she arrived on the battlefield, this sort of mentality could have caused her death no matter how strong she was.

Huo Zhenyu's reply did not go against Colonel Tang Yu's expectations. He looked at Ling Lan as if thinking of something, and announced loudly, "New Cadet Regiment vs Leiting Mecha Clan, the fifth match, New Cadet Regiment 1st-year Ling Lan wins. The match score is 3-2. The New Cadet Regiment are the final victors of this fight!"

Following this announcement, all the members of the New Cadet Regiment leapt up and cheered enthusiastically. Evidently, everyone was cheering for Boss Lan as Ling Lan had used this match's victory to establish the New Cadet Regiment's unparalleled position so that no one could contend against them.

Wu Jiong, who was seated below, did not feel regret upon hearing the cheers, but instead waved his arms and shouted for joy along with the other members. Multiple past experiences had made him understand that though he might be able to lead an extremely powerful team, he was incapable of making them into a winning team that would triumph in every battle. Reason being, he lacked Ling Lan's boldness and aggressiveness, and even in terms of mentality, he was unable to be like Ling Lan who could always remain unperturbed regardless of any difficulty he encountered.

"Haha, we've truly won..." Several of the team leaders beside Gao Jinyun revealed dazed, silly smiles after witnessing the result. Even though they had been convinced by Gao Jinyun to continue following Boss Lan, they were nevertheless stunned after witnessing Boss Lan defeat the military academy's number one combatant and emerge victorious in this wagered fight; the shock of this outcome was too huge.

Gao Jinyun laughed proudly to his heart's content. "Hahaha, I'm sure you're all aware now of Boss Lan's prowess... Leiting wanting to absorb the New Cadet Regiment is a dream as long as Boss Lan is here!"

One of the leaders took a deep breath and finally calmed down. Then, in admiration, he said, "Leader Gao, you're right. We shall follow you unquestioningly in the future."

Currently, these leaders were secretly rejoicing that they had been convinced by Gao Jinyun because of their close relationship with him and had patiently waited for the result. This moment proved they had made the right move; they could not help but feel sorry for those few leaders who had not had the resolve to stay and had sought

out alternative options. As Gao Jinyun mentioned, there was only one opportunity — grabbing it meant grabbing it, while missing it meant that you had truly missed the opportunity.

"Let's go, we shall go and welcome Boss Lan!" Gao Jinyun looked at the members of the New Cadet Regiment rushing forth to the stage and suggested excitedly.

"Alright!" The several leaders answered loudly one by one. At this moment, they indeed wanted to enjoy this hard-earned joyous occasion with everyone in the New Cadet Regiment. This was a victory belonging to them, and represented that the New Cadet Regiment had truly established themselves in the military academy.

# Chapter 265

## A Hypocritical Person

The New Cadet Regiment's joy was set off in contrast with Leiting's gloomy expressions as they were still in disbelief, unconvinced that Leiting would ultimately lose this battle... Heaven knows how long it had been since Leiting last tasted defeat. However, the battle this time had given them a taste of it and this feeling was absolutely unpleasant.

Lin Zhidong looked at the elevated stage, which was almost totally surrounded by the New Cadet Regiment, with an unsightly expression. He knew that the ensuing period of time belonged to the victor's celebration and there was no longer any place for Leiting to stay. In any case, he did not wish remain and continue to see Leiting losing face.

Another matter which he had to consider thoroughly was how to give Regiment Commander Qiao an explanation... The defeat this time would definitely deal an unprecedented blow on Leiting's prestige as the opponent they had lost to were the new cadets who had just enrolled in the military academy.

Lin Zhidong could already imagine the Thunder King's rocketing fury and his body could not help but tremble. Soon after, Lin Zhidong calmed down and gnashed his teeth in frustration as he said, "Let's go!"

Following his words, the members of the Leiting Mecha Clan who felt ashamed to continue staying here soon left the battle hall. Of course, while they were leaving, they heard numerous cadets making loud booing sounds, among them the cadets from the New Cadet Regiment and also cadets from other factions. Also among them were supporters who were fond of Leiting but were currently disappointed in them.

Many senior cadets of the various influential factions were incapable of accepting the fact that Leiting had lost to the New Cadet Regiment; their feelings were directly reflected in their booing.

The deeper the love, the more profound the hate when love turns into hate. This sort of feeling was present within them and no matter what, Leiting losing this match had



indeed disappointed many cadets.

Before Lin Zhidong left the battle stadium, he could not help but turn around and look at the stern, young man standing in the middle of the elevated stage accepting the New Cadet Regiment members' enthusiastic cheers. His dignified appearance resembled that of a general returning in victory and even more like a king who had opened up a new territory and was enjoying the supportive cheers of his subjects...

Actually, Lin Zhidong had misunderstood. Ling Lan's default was an ice-cold expression [T/C (ryu): Yep, it's her trademark face by now.]; she would still maintain this look even when being cursed at. In short, Ling Lan's cool and aloof expression in this situation was indeed extremely aggravating...

"Don't be too complacent... Leiting will definitely return this grudge!" Lin Zhidong's expression was chilly as he sniffed one last time before he turned and left this combat hall that had embarrassed him so.



As the members of the New Cadet Regiment rushed towards the elevated stage, Huo Zhenyu, as one of the participants of the fight, left the stage in loneliness. Other than a few of his team members, no one paid any attention to his actions as the former king of combat.

At present, everyone's attention was gathered on Ling Lan who was in the middle of the elevated stage. He was the leading role in this battle, and the newly emerged king of combat in the military academy!

Of course, Huo Zhenyu saw the people from Leiting leaving with their tail between their legs and also heard the sounds of booing which had spread throughout the battle stadium. Sadness shrouded his heart; it was his lack of strength that caused this result.

At this moment, one of his team members saw his state and hastily said, "Boss Huo, let's head to the treatment centre. Your injuries are very severe..."

Hearing the other's words, Huo Zhenyu gently patted his own right arm which had gone totally numb and said indifferently, "It's just a small injury and is of no importance. Unfortunately, I've lost and caused Leiting to lose this wagered fight..."

"How is this a small injury? Boss Huo, you still have to participate in the division assessments in a month's time." That team member was anxious, as this was related to Boss Huo's future growth.

"That's right, Boss Huo, you had best head to the treatment centre for treatment!" The other team members urged.

Huo Zhenyu no longer refused; he headed towards the treatment centre with a few team members.

On the way, one of the team members spoke with dissatisfaction. "Boss Huo, those leaders of the current Leiting are going too far, to think that not even one came to see you... If we had known earlier, Boss Huo shouldn't have agreed to participate in this fight."

"Forget it, in any case, I am still Leiting's former leader and I can't reject a request of theirs when they come looking for me." Huo Zhenyu smiled bitterly. Even if he had passed Leiting to Qiao Ting, he was still unable to reject them when Leiting was in need of help.

"Merely, it's unfortunate for Nie Feng-ming as he will definitely have to be absent for the examination a month later. He had always been anxiously longing to enlist for the 23rd Division," said another team member with regret on his face. According to the news sent over by the team members who had accompanied him to the treatment centre, Nie Feng-ming had to receive treatment for ten months before he could completely recover. That was to say, he would definitely miss this year's examination.

Huo Zhenyu went silent for a moment before saying with a heavy heart, "I've let down Feng-ming."

"No, it was Ling Lan. His attack was too ruthless," one of the members spoke as his face revealed hatred.

The few of them had formed a small mecha team in the military academy and had grown up together during these five years, and had long become brothers of different surnames with bonds no inferior to biological brothers. With Nie Feng-ming's current situation, they could not help but hate Ling Lan who had heavily injured him.

"Rest assured, I will not forget about this grudge," said Huo Zhenyu coldly.

Even though they were aware that Nie Feng-ming was partly to blame for receiving such a serious injury, but in terms of feelings, Huo Zhenyu was unable to accept his own brother landing in such a miserable condition...

Regarding how they treated their brothers and comrades, Huo Zhenyu's and Ling Lan's mentality were more or less the same. Even if the fault was on their side, they were intolerant of outsiders taking actions!

"I've decided to apply for enlistment to the 23rd Division in a month's time and wait for Nie Feng-ming's return. Inevitably, there will be a day when we'll run into Ling Lan, and at that time, it'll be time for us to pay back what we received today."

Huo Zhenyu revealed his decision and caused the team members around him to be astonished; they knew that Boss Huo's original target was the 1st Division as his idol was the Federation's First Marshal, while the 23rd Division's commander Ling Xiao was Nie Feng-ming's idol. This was also the reason Nie Feng-ming had chosen to enter the 23rd Division's enlistment examination.

"Since Boss Huo is going to enter the 23rd Division examination, I shall follow him too!"

"I'll enter the 23rd Division too."

"Me too!"

The other team members, who were originally hesitant whether to follow Boss Huo or enter the division of their own idols, no longer had any apprehensions due to Boss Huo changing his mind and so declared their determination to follow his lead.

Huo Zhenyu did not speak but merely smiled. This was the only thing he could do for Nie Feng-ming, by setting a foundation for him before he entered the division. Once he joined them, their small team would once again gather and fight together to obtain the highest achievements. Following that, they would then find Ling Lan and return their bitter hatred of today.



Currently within the cabin, after Li Shiyu witnessed the result and saw the new cadets rushing towards the arena all at once, he turned towards Yun Xiu and said, "Let's go."

Upon hearing that, Yun Xiu was in shock as he said, "What? We're leaving right now?"

The number of cadets leaving the arena was the highest right now and in previous times, Li Shiyu would usually wait for an hour and a half for the majority of the crowd to leave before he left. However, why was he anxious to leave this time?

"I have to head to the treatment centre and look at that foolish little brother of mine, to see if he's still able to move..." explained Li Shiyu.

"Ah, so you were the type who would show love and respect as what good brothers should?" Yun Xiu did not believe the explanation Li Shiyu gave in the slightest.

Li Shiyu immediately shot a glare at Yun Xiu. Of course he would show love and respect as what good brothers would, but that was reserved for his older cousin.

Seeing Li Shiyu's stern gaze, Yun Xiu hastily raised his hands in surrender, indicating that he would not say anything else and obediently follow Li Shiyu to leave the cabin.

In Wuji's cabin, Zhao Jun yawned, and to those beside him he asked, "The fight has ended, are you all intending to stay here?"

Han Yu's expression was somewhat gloomy as he said, "I want to watch the replay. You can leave first if you're not interested."

The New Cadet Regiment was unexpectedly strong and caused Han Yu to feel threatened. In particular, the majority of the cadets in the New Cadet Regiment belonged to the Central Scout Academy's faction and so he could not help but be concerned whether they would join the Doha faction.

At the same time, Wei Ji nodded and said, "I would also like to watch the replay. All of you can do as you wish."

Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng stealthily exchanged a glance before Zhao Jun spoke up to say, "I'm not interested. We'll talk about it after they become expert mecha operators. Lanfeng, what about you, are you leaving together or would you like to stay?"

Li Lanfeng shrugged his shoulders in a relaxed manner. "It's as what you said, after they become an expert in mecha piloting during their second year, perhaps I will be interested. To invest effort in thinking about them right now is somewhat not worth it."

Hearing his words, Zhao Jun smiled. "In that case, let's leave together."

Li Lanfeng stood and replied, "Alright, let's leave together." He then said to Han Yu and Wei Ji, "It's fine to attach some importance to them, but the Thunder King will certainly be the number one person who wishes to dispose of the New Cadet Regiment." His words implied that it was too early for Wuji to be apprehensive towards the New Cadet Regiment; it would be more suitable after the New Cadet Regiment had weathered Thunder King Qiao Ting's fury.

Han Yu and Wei Ji smiled in response, and only after Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng left did Han Yu put away his smile as he snorted coldly. "Does he truly think he's Wuji's strategist?"

Li Lanfeng's attitude of being superior in all aspects caused Han Yu to be increasingly discontented with him. Unknowingly, he started disliking Li Lanfeng more and more, but in the past, he had definitely felt that Li Lanfeng was a good person. However, why does he seem so pretentious right now?

Wei Ji replied unenthusiastically, "There's nothing to be done. Two years ago, we had indeed relied on many of his schemes, so although he isn't our official strategist, everyone in Wuji considers him as one." After speaking, Wei Ji could not help but look towards Han Yu. "I don't know why you do not see eye to eye with Li Lanfeng. I feel that he doesn't have huge ambitions and has been diligent regarding Wuji's affairs..."

Han Yu furrowed his brows. "Actually, it was from last year that I started to always feel that something's slightly off with Li Lanfeng. Right now, the more I see him, the more I feel that there's a problem with him. Don't you feel that his smile is very fake?"

Wei Ji smiled bitterly and shook his head. He truly did not see anything wrong with Li Lanfeng. If not for Han Yu being extremely discontented with Li Lanfeng, he really did not wish to fall out with the other. After all, the relationship between the four of them had been very good in the past.

Han Yu looked towards Zhou Ya and Wang Hui. "What do you think?"

Wang Hui followed Wei Ji in shaking his head, expressing that he could not identify what wrong there was with Li Lanfeng.

## Chapter 266

### The Li Family Brothers!

Zhou Ya was silent for a moment, before saying measuredly, "Senior Li's smile is indeed very warm and genial, but I become nervous whenever he smiles. Maybe it's because it's my first time interacting with Senior Li, so I'm unused to him..." Zhou Ya's expression seemed somewhat conflicted.

Before Zhou Ya had finished speaking, Han Yu was already clapping his hands together and saying, "See! Zhou Ya feels the same way I do..."

These words made Zhou Ya smile wryly. Actually, he himself could not say why he was nervous around Li Lanfeng, but it was definitely not like Han Yu was saying, that Li Lanfeng's smile was very fake. Li Lanfeng was obviously a kind and gentle senior — why was Regiment Commander Han Yu so against the other?

Of course, no matter how doubtful Zhou Ya was, he would not say anything, because the antagonism and strife within the upper ranks usually did not have much reason to it. Oftentimes, just for the sake of an extra share of power, one party would push another party into hell... while this current situation was just a blatant dislike so far.

However, Zhou Ya did not mind this situation. Han Yu's behaviour was in large part helping him clear out a path to become Wuji's military adviser. It should be known that within Wuji, Li Lanfeng was the publicly acknowledged strategist of the mecha clan, holding extremely high esteem among its members. Without Han Yu's help, relying on himself, he might have to wait until Li Lanfeng graduates and leaves the academy before he would be able to take on the role of adviser.

As an ambitious person, Zhou Ya did not want to dawdle within the military academy for 2 to 3 years. He yearned to ascend the skies in one step, craving the chance to display his full abilities, and desired the respect and admiration of the clan members.

And so, Zhou Ya kept his silence, as if tacitly agreeing with Han Yu that he too felt something off about Li Lanfeng...

Having left the Wuji box, Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng did not know what was happening inside the box. They walked till the end of the hallway, where they happened to bump into the Li Shiyu and Yun Xiu who had also departed from their box.

When the four met, they were all startled...

A trace of confusion appeared silently on Li Shiyu's handsome face. This masked youth before his eyes, who was radiating such a warm and gentle aura, seemed somewhat familiar...

Li Lanfeng was the quickest to regain his bearings. He smiled and gave the other side a cadet's salute, and then said, "Li Shiyu, dux of the military medical research specialization, I've heard such great things about you <sup>1</sup>."

"Erm, hello, have I met you somewhere before?" Li Shiyu's brow creased and he could not help but ask.

"Well, no, but I've seen you before!" said Li Lanfeng with a smile.

"Oh? When?" Li Shiyu pursued the question. His memory had always been good — this person across from him had such a strange sense of familiarity, he just could not believe that he really had not met him before.

Smilingly, Li Lanfeng was about to answer when Zhao Jun beside him asked with a quirked brow, "Lanfeng, so this is the so-called direct descendant of your Li family? That genius Li Shiyu you mentioned?"

Li Shiyu jolted at these words, blurting out, "You're a Li family descendant too?"

Li Lanfeng nodded and said, "Yes, but I'm just a branch descendant. However, I was previously lucky enough to be in the same school as Young Master Mulan. It's just that Young Master Mulan dropped out later due to illness, and I've not seen him since then... I wonder how Young Master Mulan is now. Is he well?" asked Li Lanfeng with a face filled with concern.

Hearing this, Li Shiyu's mood dipped. "Cousin Brother Mulan's body is indeed not well." However, very quickly, Li Shiyu rallied and said confidently, "However, I believe Cousin Brother Mulan will definitely get better."

A strange light flashed through Li Lanfeng's eyes, and he nodded and said, "Yes, Young Master Mulan will definitely get better."

Li Lanfeng's words put Li Shiyu in a good mood instantly. Within the Li family clan, this was the first time he had heard another Li family member willing to believe that his eldest cousin brother would recover. This made Li Shiyu extremely grateful, naturally feeling a sense of kinship with Li Lanfeng.

"You're going back?" Li Lanfeng continued to ask.

Before Li Shiyu could respond, Yun Xiu had piped up from beside him, "We're going to go see Shiyu's younger brother <sup>2</sup>, that Li Yingjie who fought second for the New Cadet Regiment."

A trace of surprise rose on Li Lanfeng's face. "So Young Master Shiyu is also planning to go see Young Master Yingjie... I was just prepared to go check on Young Master Yingjie's condition myself. Why don't we go together?"

Zhao Jun cast a thoughtful glance at Li Lanfeng — mind you, when they had stepped out of the box, the other had not mentioned anything of the sort. However, he had always respected Li Lanfeng's decisions, so he quietly played along.

Li Shiyu hesitated for a moment, but then nodded. Based off the other's good will towards his eldest cousin brother alone, he could not refuse the other <sup>3</sup>.

Just like that, the four of them hurried to the treatment centre. The moment they entered its doors, they could see that the large hall had been split into two factions, each staking out one corner, dutifully ignoring the other.

These people were very easy to tell apart. One side was all dressed in the green freshmen uniform, so it was obvious they were first years. Meanwhile, on the other side, there was green and also blue, but the age difference clearly marked them as upper year students. It went without saying that these two factions were respectively the people from the New Cadet Regiment and the Leiting Mecha Clan.

The moment Li Shiyu's group of four stepped into the treatment centre, they drew the gazes of everyone inside. After all, three of them were dressed in the blue uniform of the elite, while Li Shiyu was even dressed in the white uniform of a dux. This colour would draw attention no matter where he went.



However, the first years of the New Cadet Regiment very quickly averted their eyes. The age of the four newcomers clearly marked them as seniors; the members of the New Cadet Regiment did not think that these people were here for them. After all, they did not know such impressive seniors, so these people could only be from the Leiting Mecha Clan.

On the other hand, those from the Leiting Mecha Clan were in a state of confusion. Several sharp-eyed people had noticed Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun, who they knew were from the Wuji faction. Moreover, Li Shiyu was also an influential figure within the school. The Leiting Mecha Clan may dare to offend everyone and anyone, but they would never dare to offend any student from the military medical research specialization. This was because, in future, those people were very likely to be the ones responsible for their lives... no one wanted to gamble with their lives.

The treatment centre fell under the jurisdiction of the military medical research department. Seeing the dux of the department in charge of them personally here at the scene, the staff were instantly nervous. One of the leaders of the staff in the treatment centre came forwards to ask, "Dux Li, may I know what instructions you have for visiting us at this time?"

*Please don't let there have been any mistakes in the treatment plans submitted by the treatment centre...* a layer of sweat formed on the forehead of the team leader. If that was truly the case, that meant that they might very likely lose their jobs here at the military academy, be dismissed from service, and be sent back to their homes... Mind you, in the Federation, the social status and treatment of military personnel were of the highest calibre — the workers really did not want to lose the honour of being a soldier.

"I heard that in this wagered fight, many people were injured, and the injuries were very serious, so I specially came over to take a look." Li Shiyu's words let the team leader of the treatment centre instantly release a sigh of relief.

"Can you give me an overview of the patients' current conditions?" Li Shiyu continued.

The team leader of the treatment centre quickly said, "Yes, Dux Li, please come this way..." He led Li Shiyu over to the healing pods of one of the upper years, and then continued to say, "This student's condition is especially severe. The bones of his entire body display different degrees of breakage, but strangely enough, such wide-scale traumatic impact did not deal any fatal injury to the inner organs. It's clear to see that

the one who did this has extremely precise control on his application of strength. When we first saw it, we were all extremely stunned and awed by it. Even though the opponent had shown mercy, not dealing any fatal injury, for this patient to fully recover in less than ten months is impossible."

The team leader peeked carefully at Li Shiyu, then said softly, "Unless we take out the special medicinal agents the military medical research specialization has developed, then perhaps the time could be shortened."

Li Shiyu merely nodded but said nothing. He naturally knew how the other had been injured — that youth had brought it all on himself. Thus, he had no interest whatsoever in helping him. Besides, the other was also the adversary of his younger cousin's party. Regardless of how much he looked down on that jerk of a cousin of his, he would not allow others to bully a member of their Li family...

The team leader saw Li Shiyu keeping silent, and sighed softly, but said nothing further. After all, the special medicinal agents of the military medical research department were extremely precious. He had only brought it up earlier to try his luck — if Li Shiyu had truly been moved to help, then it would have been a blessing upon this patient.

The team leader then led Li Shiyu's group of four to another healing pod. This healing pod held a first year. The surrounding youths saw them approach and all revealed stern and nervous expressions as they stared at them, as if on guard against any sign of intended harm to their companion.

Seeing this, Li Lanfeng nodded mentally. This New Cadet Regiment was more united than he had imagined — it looks like they really could not be underestimated.

The team leader pointed at the healing pod and said to Li Shiyu, "This is a first year student. Multiple wound-sites on his internal organs and meridians... it can be said that he was pretty much half dead, but his body's regenerative ability is extraordinarily strong. In tandem with the recovery agents here, he should be back to normal in three months."

Li Shiyu approached and took a look, and found that the one lying in the healing pod was that tenacious youth who had fought after Li Yingjie. That brutal match had stirred even him... he had initially thought that the youth's wounds would take at least half a year to heal, but surprisingly, he would be okay after just three months. It looked

like this youth's physical constitution was truly exceptional.

The team leader then pointed at the healing pod next to this one and said, "That one is also a first year student. His injuries are also very severe — his left scapula <sup>4</sup> is shattered — he won't be recovered till 2 or 3 months later."

Li Shiyu walked closer to see, and as expected, it was Li Yingjie. He was lying in the healing pod with a tortured expression of pain, and Li Shiyu could hear some vague moaning coming from him. In contrast, the other first year student beside him who was injured much worse was able to tolerate the pain stoically without any change in his expression.

Li Shiyu was instantly in a bad mood. He sniffed coldly and said, "Just a minor injury and you're behaving so disgracefully. You're really losing the face of the Li family."

Li Yingjie heard a familiar voice coming from outside the healing pod and forced his eyes open, only to become instantly wide-eyed with shock. He stared at Li Shiyu — hells, why was his second elder cousin brother <sup>5</sup> here?

Back when Li Shiyu had gone against his grandfather's orders, choosing to give up on his identity as inheritor, even though Li Yingjie did not know the full story, he had heard a thing or two about it. Still, he just could not figure out why this incomprehensible second elder cousin brother of his would appear within the military academy, and wearing the white uniform he admired so much to boot. This meant that Li Shiyu was definitely the dux of one of the specializations, and this was no easy feat.

Even the proud Li Yingjie had already given up on his goal of becoming dux, because Li Yingjie knew that the dux of their year's mecha specialization would be none other than Boss Ling Lan.

# Chapter 267

## Transferral of Treatment!

Li Yingjie was still secretly wondering what the heck was going on when Li Shiyu said to the staff member monitoring Li Yingjie's healing pod, "Help me open up this healing pod!"

"This..." The staff member looked dubiously at his team leader, not daring to obey immediately. Even though Li Shiyu was the dux of the military medical research specialization, thus being like half a leader to them, this matter was related to the treatment of a student, so the staff member did not dare to move recklessly.

Seeing this, the team leader hurried to explain, "Dux Li, this student is currently undergoing treatment. If we interrupt the process now, it might affect the final recovery time."

At these words, Li Shiyu raised his right hand and turned on his communicator to carefully enter some information, then said, "Don't worry. I've already requested to take on Li Yingjie's treatment from the military academy. Very soon, you all should receive the transfer procedure request here."

As the dux of the military medical research specialization, Li Shiyu had the right to request primary responsibility over the care of any patient. Of course, the military academy would still hold responsibility over the two students. The administration would keep track of the entire treatment process, circumventing any possible harm that could occur to either of the involved parties. Either side that committed any fault would be strictly punished by the military academy.

Hearing Li Shiyu's explanation, the team leader relaxed. Very quickly, the team leader received the transfer order, and so instructed the staff member to stop the treatment process of the healing pod and open the pod.

This out of the ordinary event drew the concern of the other first years waiting in the treatment centre. They all gathered close, and upon seeing the healing pod suddenly being opened, their expressions changed. One of the students was Xie Yi, who had accompanied Li Yingjie here for treatment under Ling Lan's orders. Enraged, he asked,

"What do you all think you're doing? Don't you know that interrupting treatment will affect his recovery?"

The team leader rushed to explain, "This student will be transferred to the Military Medical Research Centre for treatment. You all can relax. The treatment and medicinal agents there are several times better than those we have here. Not only will his injuries not be affected, he might even be able to recover even earlier."

Xie Yi peered dubiously at Li Shiyu and the others — would these people who were obviously seniors be so kind and benevolent? Xie Yi could not be blamed for overthinking things. After all, they had just had a confrontation with the seniors of Leiting. According to the update they had received from a member who had rushed over from the arena, Boss Lan had just defeated the top fighter of Leiting, officially winning the wagered fight. It could not be excluded that the people of Leiting might turn to anger from their shame, and take the opportunity to do something underhanded while they still had not received direct orders from those in the upper ranks.

Seeing this, Li Lanfeng smiled and explained, "We're from the Wuji Mecha Clan, and this is Dux Li from the military medical research specialization. If you understand how our military academy is run, you'll know that the military medical research specialization is never involved in the conflicts among the various factions."

As military doctors were the holy ones who treated the sick and healed the wounded, they needed to treat all patients objectively without any bias. Thus, whether it was within the military academy or within the actual military, military doctors were absolutely not allowed to be involved in any conflicts among the various factions. This was because once a military doctor was involved, they could not guarantee that their heart would remain pure. Especially on the battlefield, if a doctor hesitated or wavered due to their patient being from a different faction, it could result in a death, and this was something the military could not condone.

From the start, Xie Yi was a news-gatherer, a busybody — he knew what the senior across him had said was not wrong. If the other was really from the military doctor specialization, he could certainly relax, for the other would definitely not do anything bad to Li Yingjie. As such, he acquiesced, but he still kept a close watch on Li Shiyu and his group. The moment he detected anything odd, he would make sure to prevent them at first notice from harming Li Yingjie.

At this time, Xie Yi was still rather simple and naive, not knowing that military doctors were people too. They experienced the full gamut of emotions just like any other person, and especially towards those particular people whom they loved and hated in equal measure, even if they would treat them dutifully, they would still find all manner of ways to 'torment' the other. And despite how these torments were actually also beneficial to the patient, it went without question that there was not a single patient who would be willing to accept such treatment if they had been given a choice.

As the healing pod was completely opened, the healing fluid inside the pod was suctioned out at the same time. Very soon, Li Yingjie's body was revealed, and several seconds later, the uniform he was wearing was blown dry — it was as if he had never been immersed in healing fluid.

At this moment, Li Yingjie finally found the chance to speak. He asked, "Second elder cousin brother, why are you here?"

"Hmph, why can't I be here?" Li Shiyu harrumphed coldly. Facing Li Yingjie, he did not have the same patience he had when dealing with his eldest cousin brother. He found this brat here annoying no matter how he looked at him.

Li Yingjie was instantly left speechless. He found that he was indeed a great idiot for asking this question. Li Shiyu being here, dressed in the uniform of a dux no less, naturally meant he was a student of this military academy. And being able to be a student of the First Men's Military Academy, of course meant he had passed the admissions tests. Could his brain have been injured when he had been struck previously?

"Fine, that was a stupid question. I should ask, what are you doing here? Are you here to laugh at me?" Li Yingjie stared unhappily at Li Shiyu. His relationship with his second elder cousin brother was not very good; he would not be so self-deluded to think that his cousin was here to be chummy with him.

"At least you are self-aware, wise enough to know you're a joke. Yes, I'm here to lecture you. Performing so terribly on the stage, you've really disgraced our Li family," scolded Li Shiyu, disappointed. Even though Li Shiyu had rejected the position of Li family inheritor, this did not mean he did not acknowledge that he was of the Li family. Thus, seeing Li Yingjie perform so badly, he was extremely dissatisfied.

Li Yingjie rolled his eyes at these words. How could he have forgotten that his cousin

brother had an inherently venomous tongue <sup>1</sup>? Whenever they met, his cousin brother would critique him till it seemed as if he were worthless. Of course, he had not wanted to just take it, constantly looking for a way to fight back. But unfortunately, the other was older than him by quite a few years, and relied on his advantage of the extra years of strength and knowledge of combat skills to suppress Li Yingjie. Thus, he had failed many times in his attempts to object, never having found a chance to turn the tables till now.

Originally, four years ago was a very good chance for him to turn the tables, but Li Shiyu had unfortunately become at odds with grandfather because he had rejected the position of inheritor, subsequently moving out of the Li family mansion. This caused Li Yingjie to no longer have the chance to meet the other to attempt bringing his revolt to the final stages...

Li Shiyu paid no mind to whether Li Yingjie would be disgruntled by his words, instead continuing to instruct, "Later, follow me to the Military Medical Research Centre. After this, your injuries will be my responsibility."

"That's not necessary. Since I can be healed here too, why should I go there?" retorted Li Yingjie haughtily. He did not want to owe this annoying second elder cousin brother anything, and would rather suffer a little more here.

At these words, Li Shiyu's face darkened and he leaned in close, bending over to pat Li Yingjie's still immobile face within the healing pod, and said lowly, "My taking over your treatment, is already a fact. So, just give up."

Li Shiyu's dark face made the warning bells in Li Yingjie's heart blare loudly — could it be that his cousin brother was shifting his venom from his tongue to his hands <sup>2</sup> instead? He struggled desperately, trying to speak. Right then, an icy voice suddenly rang out from the main doors of the treatment centre. Despite the size of the treatment centre and how many people there were inside, this voice seemed to ring out by everyone's ears, clear and coherent.

"I would like to know, what in the world is going on?" From the doorway, this question signalled the entrance of a coldly dashing youth radiating a cold aura as he slowly walked into the treatment centre.

For some reason, the moment he entered the treatment centre, the entire centre's temperature seemed to drop by several degrees. Some people even felt an invisible

pressure descend upon them. The initially somewhat raucous noise was abruptly silenced, and everyone's eyes were drawn and held by this youth.

It turned out that Ling Lan who had won the arena fight had arrived, and behind her were quite a few of the team leaders of the New Cadet Regiment.

Li Yingjie's initially grumpy expression instantly brightened when he heard this voice. He turned his head to look over and shouted out, "Boss Lan!"

This behaviour of Li Yingjie's made Li Shiyu's face change minutely, and the gaze of Li Lanfeng, who had been observing Li Yingjie all this while, flashed briefly. Li Lanfeng lifted his head to look in Ling Lan's direction, and his gaze became extremely solemn.

"Li Yingjie!" Li Shiyu could not hold back an angry bellow. His voice was raised quite a few decibels — it was clear to see how much rage was contained behind it. Li Shiyu was extremely dissatisfied with how easily Li Yingjie had acknowledged another as his boss, and was also sad on behalf of his eldest cousin brother. This was because he felt that only Li Mulan should be the boss of them Li family brothers. And Li Yingjie, this great big dumbass, had actually given this honourable title of their eldest cousin brother to someone else — this was something he could not forgive.

Li Shiyu's furious roar did not cow Li Yingjie, who instead had an expression filled with stubborn recalcitrance on his face. Li Yingjie was exactly like this. He was someone who, if he does not acknowledge you, no matter how much you pressure him, he would still refuse to submit. However, if you could gain his heartfelt deference, one cold glance would be enough to freeze him in his place. Right now, this personality of Li Yingjie's was out in full force, which just made Li Shiyu's rage flare even higher.

If it could be said that meeting his eldest cousin brother made Li Shiyu want to draw close instinctively, wanting to protect the other, then meeting Li Yingjie was completely the other way round. All of Li Shiyu's initial praiseworthy good temperament would completely disappear, only leaving behind roars of anger and a venomous tongue... not once could they co-exist peacefully.

Li Shiyu and Li Yingjie glared at each other. On one side, Li Lanfeng's expression shifted minutely, but just as he was about intervene and mediate, a glacial voice rang out extremely close to him, "Why isn't my party member being treated? Can you explain this?"



Apparently, Ling Lan had already arrived by the healing pod of Li Yingjie, and was speaking directly to the staff member in charge of treating Li Yingjie.

Perhaps because she had just come straight from combat, there was still a trace of killing intent on Ling Lan's body. This intimidating aura actually made the staff member break out in cold sweat all across his forehead, unable to reply for a moment.

"Hm?" Ling Lan quirked an eyebrow, her freezing gaze driving a bolt of chill into the staff member's heart. He quickly replied, "I'm sorry, he... he's been transferred to the Military Medical Research Centre."

"Transferred to the Military Medical Research Centre?" Ling Lan's brow furrowed, unsure what this meant. Xie Yi dashed up to her side and explained the entire chain of events to Ling Lan. Ling Lan nodded as she listened, finally getting the picture.

Once Xie Yi was done speaking, he retreated. Only then did Ling Lan turn her attention to Li Shiyu's group of four, and Li Shiyu's group instantly felt a wave of invisible pressure crashing onto them.

Li Lanfeng's gaze began to flicker once more, because he had sensed a familiar energy... perhaps the other was really like him. This was the very first time he had ever sensed the presence of kin — his heart could not help but pound for several beats.

# Chapter 268

## Are You Threatening Me?

Li Lanfeng's control over his emotions was undoubtedly excellent — in the blink of an eye, he had regained his composure. He continued to observe indifferently from the sidelines, but mentally made a note to try and find out more about the other to aid his future plans.

Ling Lan swept her gaze contemplatively over the four youths, and her gaze finally landed on Li Shiyu. Xie Yi had mentioned very clearly that this dux was the one who had pushed this decision through, so she said to him, "Are you the one who requested to transfer my man into the Military Medical Research Centre?"

In spite of his displeasure, Li Shiyu's good upbringing still made him nod in response, indicating that Ling Lan was right.

At that, Ling Lan raised an eyebrow and said, "I recall that, a request like that still requires the agreement of the patient being treated." After finding out about the situation, Little Four had instantly looked up all the related regulations on transferral of treatment cases. Thus, Ling Lan was now extremely clear on all the rules and procedures associated with the process — there were plenty of loopholes for her to play with...

Li Shiyu's expression darkened, but he still replied, "I'm the dux of the military medical research specialization. As long as any patient is within the treatment centre, I have the right to designate them as my patient without requiring the other's approval." That said, he did not forget to throw a fierce glare in Li Yingjie's direction...

The moment Li Shiyu said this, the senior year students all nodded in agreement, while the 1st year freshmen stared at one another, uncertain whether the military academy really had this rule.

Li Yingjie was rather bewildered by Li Shiyu's glare — when and how had he offended his second elder cousin brother now? Initially already irritated, he became even more disgruntled. His anger spiked, but still he held back, only expressing it by returning an equally scathing glare to indicate his displeasure.

Although every time Li Yingjie encountered Li Shiyu they were like primed firecrackers — ready to explode at the slightest provocation — over these many years, Li Yingjie actually knew that his cousin brother would never hurt him. Otherwise, having the full upper hand over him all these years, Li Shiyu would not have just mocked and taunted and snarked at him with words. From the time they were little till now, there had been plenty of chances for Li Shiyu to be ruthless and do away with him completely...

This was also why Li Yingjie had not rebutted his cousin's words, merely glaring back — he did not want to put Li Shiyu on the spot <sup>1</sup>.

"Furthermore, Li Yingjie is my younger cousin. As his elder cousin, giving a hand to treat him is an obligation. I can ensure that he fully recovers in almost half the time." Of course, this was based on the prerequisite that Li Yingjie had to endure through the intense agony of his body being modified and improved by the medical agents... Li Yingjie would probably remember the experience for the rest of his life. A subtle smile appeared on Li Shiyu's lips.

These words of Li Shiyu moved all of the first year students; even those members who had still been wary of Li Shiyu cast away their doubts at this time. Li Yingjie himself was convinced, but just as he was about to say he was willing, an ice-cold gaze swept over to look at him, instantly freezing him in place along with those words which were already at the tip of his tongue.

How terrifying! Compared to Boss Lan's cold gaze, his elder cousin's glares were really all too harmless. Li Yingjie swallowed the acceptance he had been about to utter, hurriedly ducking his head and pretending that he did not know anything.

Li Yingjie resolutely chose Boss Lan's side. Offending his elder cousin would just cause him to be cut by the other's venomous tongue a few times or at most incur a few minor scrapes, but if he made Boss Lan unhappy... Li Yingjie shuddered internally. He still remembered that not too long ago in the combat hall, he had seen Qi Long in a terrible state, crawling and staggering out with the last of his strength from a combat room. Qi Long's opponent that day had been Boss Lan...

Out of curiosity over Qi Long's sorry state, Li Yingjie had asked Xie Yi, who was on friendly terms with everyone in the regiment, about it. Xie Yi had told him then that Qi Long had accidentally offended Boss Lan, so Boss Lan had decided to spar with Qi Long for a week <sup>2</sup>...

And sure enough, for that entire week, Qi Long had crawled out so pitifully from the combat room every single day. Li Yingjie absolutely did not want to become the second Qi Long, so he was determined to follow Boss Lan's lead.

Obtaining Li Yingjie's cooperation, Ling Lan retracted her gaze in satisfaction. She, who had originally had a relatively so-so impression of Li Shiyu, was now looking at Li Shiyu with sparkling eyes, just like a starving fox setting its eyes on a piece of premium-grade marbled meat... um, no, an extremely good collaboration partner.

With regards to the three people who had been heavily injured in the arena fights, Ling Lan was extremely distressed and concerned. This was because she knew very well that missing too many of the physical conditioning classes would affect their final physical conditioning results. Even if the New Cadet Regiment managed to establish their foothold within the military academy as a result of this wagered fight, if the three boys could not pass the school assessment in the end due to their injuries here, Ling Lan felt that it was rather not worth it.

This was also why she had rushed over here to the treatment centre after accepting a simple round of congratulations from the members of the New Cadet Regiment. She wanted to know the conditions of the three and their final recovery prognoses<sup>3</sup>. Along the way, having discovered the treatment estimations, Little Four had told her the time needed for the three boys to recover. Luo Lang would require one month, Li Yingjie two and a half months, while Qi Long would need a whole three months... undoubtedly, the treatment time for all three of them were extremely long. This would be very disadvantageous to them in the following physical conditioning courses.

Although Ling Lan had tried asking Little Four to find a solution, Little Four's answer was that there was no way. This made Ling Lan extremely unhappy. Therefore, the moment she had entered the treatment centre to find some seniors facing off against Li Yingjie and the others, Ling Lan's mood had become even worse, causing the cold air around her to become even colder by several degrees...

But her luck was unexpectedly great! Here she was worrying about her three followers' conditions, when someone had voluntarily walked up to her front door to offer a solution. Even in her overwhelming joy, Ling Lan had begun to work the little abacus inside her mind<sup>4</sup>, calculating how best to use the other to obtain the best benefits for her followers.

Ling Lan held this strange stare on Li Shiyu for a few seconds — under this creepy

gaze, the initially calm and composed Li Shiyu actually found cold sweat breaking out along his back, as if he had stepped into some sort of trap...

The corner of Ling Lan's lips quirked up, and she suddenly opened her mouth to say, "Unfortunately, he already has a clan!" And then Ling Lan, who had initially been five paces away, was suddenly right by Li Shiyu. She pressed down on Li Shiyu's shoulder with one hand and leaned in close to say softly by his ear, "Regarding the procedures and regulations on transferral of treatment, I know no less than you..."

Li Shiyu's expression changed, but before he could say anything, Ling Lan was already back in her original position, just as if she had never moved at all. This scene caused everyone in the treatment centre to be stupefied, also causing the eyes of Li Lanfeng, who had been standing next to Li Shiyu, to narrow.

"Li Yingjie, are you willing to go with me?" Li Shiyu swiftly regained his composure, and turned his head to ask Li Yingjie. Now the key was Li Yingjie's answer. If Li Yingjie agreed, there would be no problem.

Li Yingjie had long made up his mind. Hearing Li Shiyu's question, he responded without even having to think, "I'll listen to whatever Boss Lan decides."

"Have you forgotten that you are a Li family descendant?!" Li Yingjie's reply made Li Shiyu livid once more. When had this arrogant and annoying brat become so submissive?

"No, he is still a descendant of your Li family, but he is also one of my clan members," Ling Lan interrupted to say, "You know very well that I have the right to decide everything for him."

"You..." Li Shiyu was instantly left at a loss for words, because Ling Lan was right. Once a student joined a clan, that student would no longer be solely representing himself. Instead, he now represented the clan as well, which also meant that there were some things that Li Yingjie could no longer decide for himself.

Li Lanfeng quickly stepped in to defuse the awkward scene. "Actually, everyone here is just trying to do the best for Young Master Yingjie. Regiment Commander Ling, Young Master Shiyu is the dux of the military medical research specialization. Speaking reasonably, only Young Master Shiyu has the right to use the best medicinal agents to treat Young Master Yingjie. Thus, letting Young Master Shiyu take charge of

treatment, Young Master Yingjie has everything to gain and nothing to lose."

Li Lanfeng did not wish for the two sides to fall out and become adversaries. If possible, he still wanted to collaborate with Ling Lan. Moreover, he too was worried about Li Yingjie's injuries, and he also really did not want to hurt Li Shiyu's compassionate heart filled with brotherly love...

"I know. However, I still have two clan members who are very gravely injured. I wonder if Dux Li would be willing to lend a hand?" Ling Lan did not want to draw things out with the other either, so she directly put forward her request.

"You think ultra-effective medical agents are that easy to obtain?" Li Shiyu's expression was very dark. "If Li Yingjie were not my younger cousin, I would never have offered."

"What a good big brother!" Ling Lan lifted an eyebrow and glanced at Li Shiyu, a half-smile on her face, as if she had seen through Li Shiyu's inner thoughts. This made Li Shiyu feel somewhat flustered instantly, unsure whether he had misconstrued what the other intended...

"What if I want you to treat all three of them no matter what?"

"Are you threatening me?" Li Shiyu's eyes narrowed, a faint air of danger beginning to emanate from his body.

The military medical students belonged to the neutral factions within the military academy; no individual or faction dared to offend them. After all, no one could tell whether they would ever be injured and fall into the other's hands. No one would play a fool with their life.

"If you want to think so, you can!" responded Ling Lan evenly, "This would depend on how much you, as a good elder brother, are willing to do for your younger brother."

Li Shiyu clenched his teeth so hard he almost shattered them. Who could have known that the boss Li Yingjie had acknowledged would be so shameless, actually using Li Yingjie as a bargaining chip to threaten him? He said resentfully to Li Yingjie, "This is the boss you want to follow? One who, for the sake of others, would be willing to sacrifice you?"

Li Yingjie's complexion shifted slightly, but very quickly returned to normal. He said,

"They are my brothers too. For brothers, a little sacrifice is worth it. Besides, it's not like I can't be healed. It'll just take a little longer, just as if you had never appeared..." The connotation of these words was that he would just pretend that Li Shiyu had never showed up, that he was willing to either share the blessing or suffer together with his brothers.

These words moved the people of the New Cadet Regiment. Han Jijun, Lin Zhongqing, Xie Yi, and the others all began to look at Li Yingjie with new eyes.

Frankly, Li Yingjie's reputation within the New Cadet Regiment had never been very good. After all, his character was already deeply rooted — his arrogant tone and haughty manner were rather irritating. But now, they were seeing Li Yingjie in a new light. Apparently, that annoying and arrogant punk was not a selfish person — he was in fact willing to sacrifice himself for his brothers. All this had just been hidden below that pompous appearance, unknown by others.

Hearing Li Yingjie's reply, Li Shiyu was so angry that he almost blurted out <sup>5</sup>: *You can bloody go live and die as you like! I don't want to treat you anymore!*

## Chapter 269

### A Twenty-four Filial Exemplars Dad!

However, his eldest cousin brother Li Mulan's words surfaced within his mind. He had said before that Li Yingjie was not a bad person at heart, only being steered towards the wrong tracks by some people within the Li family. If possible, his eldest cousin brother still hoped that Li Shiyu could help Li Yingjie out, pulling him back onto the right path...

And now, this situation was proving his eldest cousin brother right. Someone who was willing to sacrifice himself for his brothers — how bad could his heart really be? Perhaps this was an opportunity. If he could improve his relationship with Li Yingjie through this matter, perhaps he would be able to accomplish what his eldest cousin brother had wished for...

Still, just thinking about this forced buy one get two free deal, Li Shiyu felt depressed. Just as he had mentioned previously, those ultra-effective medical agents were not things you could just pick up randomly. Even if he was the dux, requesting special restricted medical agents for three people was still a considerable challenge, requiring him to pull some strings... honestly speaking, he did not really want to use up those connections at this time, because this was a safety line he had been keeping in reserve for his eldest cousin brother.

"Of course, if you can heal them completely within a short period of time, we, the New Cadet Regiment, including myself, will owe you one. You can call on this favour any time you like." Ling Lan was not purely pushing for Li Shiyu's help with threats; at the same time, she was also offering the price she was willing to pay. She did not want Li Yingjie to really lose this opportunity for enhanced treatment. "Of course, your request must be something we the New Cadet Regiment are able to fulfil."

"New Cadet Regiment?" A thought flashed through Li Shiyu's mind, but he soon sneered and said, "Do you really think you can guarantee the New Cadet Regiment will continue to exist?"

Ling Lan replied calmly, "There will be no problems for at least two years' time. You can choose for us to repay this favour within these two years. Of course, if the New



Cadet Regiment no longer exists by the time you submit your request, I, Ling Lan's promise still stands. You can come find me." For the sake of the future of these followers of hers, Ling Lan felt that paying this price was worth it.

Li Shiyu fell silent, contemplating whether this deal would be worth it. Right then, Li Lanfeng spoke up, "Young Master Shiyu, I believe Young Master Mulan would also agree that you should treat Young Master Yingjie and his friends..."

Li Lanfeng sighed softly, his gaze a little unfocused, and as if speaking to himself, but also as if reminding Li Shiyu, he said, "You should know, this has always been something Young Master Mulan admires..."

Li Shiyu's heart throbbed, and holding back that surge of sour-ache in his heart, he said loudly, "Alright, I agree." That said, he pushed forth two more requests for transferral of treatment on his communicator. Several seconds later, the notifications for approval came through once more.

Seeing that her goal had been achieved, the tension in Ling Lan's heart eased and she breathed a silent sigh of relief. Very quickly, the staff members had used stretchers to send the three patients to the Military Medical Research Centre. Li Shiyu and Yun Xiu bade hurried goodbyes and left as well. After all, the injuries of the three were all rather severe — they needed to hurry back to the Military Medical Research Centre and carry out their new treatment plans.

While the treatment centre was bustling with activity, Ling Lan led her posse to depart, and as she left, she coincidentally passed by Li Lanfeng's side. Ling Lan swept a disinterested glance at Li Lanfeng, and then they brushed by each other and went their separate ways...

This was Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng's first meeting. There was no conversation, no interaction between the both of them. Li Lanfeng might perhaps have retained a deep impression of Ling Lan, considering the possibility of a collaboration, but Ling Lan only felt that this man was pretty decent, helping her out by speaking in her favour at that critical moment... that was all!

Meanwhile, on the distant planet Southcrest, where the headquarters of the 23rd Division was stationed, there were currently over a hundred different things still waiting to be done. Lacking high-ranking officers within his division, the commander of the 23rd Division, Ling Xiao, not only had to fight and haggle with the other army division commanders to appropriate talent from their forces, he also had to work hard to smooth over those messes his own daughter was making... such as that ship takeover incident!

Speaking of that day, Ling Xiao had been in a video conference meeting with several commanders of the other divisions. The agenda of the meeting was naturally to request support from the brother divisions in the form of high-ranking officers. Of course, these few commanders were all part of the First Marshal's faction. Thus, they were willing to help support the establishment of an allied division within the same faction. However, Ling Xiao's appetite was truly too much — all the candidates he chose were among the most exceptional officers within their divisions. This made the commanders somewhat unhappy, but they could not reject outright, and thus began these wrangling and fruitless negotiations...

In reality, this was just Ling Xiao testing the waters by throwing out an exorbitant price — he was actually waiting for the other side to bargain with him and provide a more reasonable counter-offer <sup>1</sup>. Only this way would he be able to know what the baselines of the other commanders were. Of course, in order to obtain more talented people, Ling Xiao had already set his mind to grind it out with them. Mind you, to swiftly establish a mature army division, large numbers of excellent military officers were absolutely indispensable to form the backbone of the division. Once the skeleton structure was built up, filling it up with flesh and blood would be a much easier task.

This was just the first step. Ling Xiao had also sent out transfer requests for some of the still surviving members of his original team in the 7th Division. Whether it would succeed would still depend on whether the current commander of the 7th Division was willing to let them go, as well as whether those old subordinates of his would be willing to relocate here to work under him again.

However, just as the meeting had been going along swimmingly, a notification had popped up on Ling Xiao's communicator. After bending his head to glance at it, the initially smiling Ling Xiao had suddenly become serious, and the muscles of his face had even seemed a little stiff, as if he had received some great shock...

Ling Xiao suppressed his emotions, extremely apologetic as he set a new appointment to meet with the various commanders again later on, and then he hurriedly ended the teleconference.

This behaviour of Ling Xiao's made the commanders feel somewhat uneasy, all of them wondering whether Ling Xiao had encountered some difficulty — had they went overboard in their bargaining, pushing the price down too low, thus making Ling Xiao sad<sup>2</sup>? After all, Ling Xiao was still a young man who had just turned 40 years old. Ahem ahem, compared to those typical commanders who were at least 60 to 70 years old, he was indeed rather young...

They reckoned Ling Xiao must be finding it tough — the 23rd Division sounded great in name, giving the impression that it was a regular army division, fully equipped with the various troops and facilities associated with the running of a proper division, but it was actually just an empty husk right now. The division was lacking in both manpower and equipment — everything depended on Ling Xiao himself to gather resources and seek out good staff. Those of the other military factions were all watching coldly from the side-lines, just waiting for Ling Xiao to fail. If they of the same faction did not help out, who else would come forward to help Ling Xiao?

With that thought, what mental imbalance they originally still had settled down. It was actually just giving up a few more military officers after all — Ling Xiao's request was still quite reasonable — if each division transferred one or two exceptional officers from each troop type over, it actually would not affect the various army divisions much. Even though those officers were indeed quite outstanding, there were still a lot of other outstanding officers within their ranks; they would not miss one or two...

The commanders discussed things over in private, and ultimately decided it was better to give Ling Xiao a little face. If Ling Xiao did well, they would be well off too. Thus, when Ling Xiao reopened negotiations with them once more, the commanders had become extremely generous. Basically, whatever Ling Xiao wanted, as long as it was not too unreasonable, they would agree. This made Ling Xiao exceedingly shocked and pleased. After all, every additional competent officer was a boon to the division. This meant that he would be able to train up even more excellent troops in-house, so the 23rd Division would be able to become battle-ready as swiftly as possible.

However, in reality, those commanders were all mistaken. Ling Xiao had not encountered any great trouble, nor had he become depressed over their haggling behaviour. The reason Ling Xiao's face had become so grim was because he had been

petrified by the news about his daughter...

The fact that the First Men's Military Academy had an entrance exam was known to him. After all, he too had lived through it. He had not told Ling Lan about it because he wanted to see how Ling Lan would react — you could consider this a test a father was setting for his daughter <sup>3</sup>.

At most, Ling Xiao had thought that Ling Lan would lead her team to observe the proceedings coldly from the side-lines. That was what he had chosen to do when he had gone through the test in the past. Ling Xiao believed that based on the capabilities of his daughter and those companions of hers, obtaining the respect of the examiner-soldiers would be no problem... but he would never have imagined that his daughter would be so wildly audacious that she would actually band the students on the ship together to assume control of the ship. And even more unexpectedly, she had actually bloody succeeded...

Seeing this news, Ling Xiao chose to end his conference as soon as he could, and then ran off to laugh unreservedly at the heavens!

At this moment, he could no longer maintain his trademark composed smile. He was no longer that always smiling national idol Ling Xiao, the elegant and dashing General Ling Xiao — he was only a crazed dad taking pride in his daughter... this was his daughter! Godd\*mmit, this was his daughter! Well, alright, that was all Ling Xiao could think about. He was so proud of his baby daughter — as expected of a child of his, daring to do things even he had not dared to do...

However, after his wild bout of laughter, Ling Xiao began to frown and fret. This lass was still smart enough to know that some of the things she did had been a little overboard, and could cause the soldiers who were testing them to be punished. Thus, knowing that she had made a mess, his daughter had sent word to her old man to help settle things for her. According to Ling Lan, having held the empty title of 'father' for sixteen years, it was about time for him to do something to live up to it...

What an unfilial daughter! Although Ling Xiao was muttering about how unfilial Ling Lan was on the surface, he was actually very pleased in his heart, because this was the first time Ling Lan had personally asked him for help to clean up her mess. Even though her tone was not that wonderful, Ling Xiao knew that this was Ling Lan taking the first step — she was actively trying to accept him as a father...

Understanding the deeper meaning behind this news from Ling Lan, Ling Xiao was instantly filled with motivation. He immediately passed on the task of recruiting and stealing talent over to his assistant, and then eagerly went off to clean up the mess his daughter had made.

He first used his rank as general to brush aside the punishment order for the ship's captain, and then he requested a transfer order from military headquarters to bring in the spaceship and its entire crew, including the captain, into the 23rd Division. And after that, he immediately contacted the principal of the military academy to seal off all the results of the entrance exams this time, keeping it unannounced... Ling Xiao knew very well that once it was publicized, Ling Lan's exceptional performance would draw the attention of military headquarters, including that of the various major army divisions. This was something he absolutely would not allow.

Having done all this, Ling Xiao was still somewhat uneasy. After all, far away here at planet Southcrest <sup>4</sup>, it was very difficult for him to be on top of the latest news from the First Academy <sup>5</sup>. Therefore, he decided to personally go and check up on Ling Lan — only after he ensured there was no danger to his daughter would he be able to continue working on establishing the 23rd Division without worry.

The reason why this sort of idea would occur to Ling Xiao was that not long after this, the 5th year senior cadets would be facing their first round of application assessments for enlistment into the various army divisions, and their 23rd Division would join this assessment system of the military academies for the first time. As one of the army divisions which would be accepting cadets, he, as the commander, would have to dispatch an assessment team to assess those students who applied for enlistment to the 23rd Division.

Thus, Ling Xiao decided that this time, he would lead the team personally, though of course the assessment tasks would be delegated to his subordinate officers. His main mission would be to go check on and care for that peerlessly adorable baby girl of his...

Ling Lan? Adorable? Only a Twenty-four Filial Exemplars dad would consider a daughter with as much cool-ruthless-dominant swag as Ling Lan to be a peerlessly adorable girl... it can only be said that when it came to Ling Lan, Ling Xiao's judgement just could not be trusted.

# Chapter 270

## Setting a Trap?

Concerning this order by General Ling Xiao, the high-ranking military officers already in place were extremely puzzled. As the commander, the highest ranking leader within the division, personally leading a team to oversee an exceedingly minor assessment was definitely beneath him.

Although the First Men's Military Academy was a place to revere in the eyes of the students from the other military academies, for the various army divisions, no matter how talented the students of the First Men's Military Academy were, they still would not draw too much of the divisions' attention... the several assessments conducted every year were just a routine job to the divisions, not given any special emphasis...

Of course, if an unmatched prodigy were to appear, the various divisions would most certainly change their lackadaisical attitude, sending out their highly capable men to lead their teams to try and snatch the student from the other divisions. If this had been the case, General Ling Xiao's decision to personally lead a team would still have some degree of reason to it. But this year, there had been no news of any exceptionally outstanding character within the First Men's Military Academy. As such, this trip of General Ling Xiao was truly not worth it in the soldiers' eyes. The general might as well remain in the base camp and continue negotiating with the other commanders for talent — he would probably gain more for his time that way.

However, these men were all people who had been transferred over from various other divisions; they were not close confidants of General Ling Xiao. And so, though they might have objections towards this unexpected decision of General Ling Xiao, not many dared to say anything. And even those who wanted to object found themselves unable to say anything when faced with that warm and kindly smiling face of General Ling Xiao... cough, cough, cough, saying no to that smiling face really required courage and determination.

In the end, there was naturally no one who actually raised any objections; Ling Xiao extremely easily became the leader of the assessment team. This made Ling Xiao rejoice secretly — it looked like having no close confidants within the division actually

had its good points...

Of course, Ling Xiao was still rational. He knew that using his commander's status to participate in the assessment was extremely inappropriate. Thus, he concealed his name and changed his surname, and rummaged up his past major general uniform for the trip. This made the officers of the 23rd Division let out a great sigh of relief — although it was still rather ostentatious for a major general to lead an assessment team, at least it was not too illogical. This would not humiliate the 23rd Division too much.

When Lan Luofeng found out about Ling Xiao's decision, she was both happy and sad. Happy that Ling Xiao could go to the First Men's Military Academy to visit their daughter Ling Lan personally and see how she was doing, but privately sad that her daughter could not regain her true female identity, instead needing to stay at the First Men's Military Academy and impersonate a man, hanging out with all those men for at least another four years...

Having her emotions stirred up by all this, Ling Xiao was once again struck by tragedy. That night, he was once again chased out of the bedroom, forced to stay in his study for the entire night... Of course, Ling Xiao put it nicely by claiming he had work to do, but everyone here knows exactly what was going on.

In the end, when the time came for Ling Xiao to go, Lan Luofeng decisively made Ling Xiao bring along several boxes worth of stuff, instructing Ling Xiao to make sure to hand them over to Ling Lan no matter what. As for how he could do that, that was not a problem Lan Luofeng had to worry about.

Ling Xiao was incapable of denying Lan Luofeng's requests, so amidst bitter chuckles, he brought all of the boxes onto the military ship... thus, there was now one more thing Ling Xiao had to worry about, and that was how he could deliver so many things to Ling Lan without drawing any attention!

Right then, Ling Lan had no clue that her old man was actually abusing his authority to hide his identity and come to the military academy to conduct assessments. At the moment, Ling Lan's wrath had been incited by a sudden incident...

Due to Li Shiyu's intervention, Luo Lang, who originally would have needed at least one month to recover, was already spiritedly running about just after ten days.

Still, Ling Lan was worried, so she conducted a thorough examination of Luo Lang's body <sup>1</sup>, and discovered that he was indeed fully recovered without any remnant problems. Even more shocking to Ling Lan was the fact that Luo Lang's physical constitution was actually much improved from its original baseline. This made Ling Lan curious about Li Shiyu, wondering how he had managed to repair Luo Lang's body so well...

Perhaps, Li Shiyu was someone she could collaborate with! Ling Lan was extremely pleased with Li Shiyu's treatment methods. In order to ensure the lives and safety of her team, tying down a skilful military doctor was necessary <sup>2</sup>. Ling Lan decisively stretched her greedy hands out towards Li Shiyu...

At this moment, Li Shiyu, who was at the treatment centre researching Li Yingjie's and Qi Long's physical data, suddenly sneezed violently. This made the instructor beside him very worried — was his beloved disciple being tired out too much lately, causing his immune system to be weakened?

His instructor's concern made Li Shiyu somewhat uncertain himself, so he quickly ran a full-body exam on himself. The results showed that all his body levels were above average standards, indicating that he was very healthy. This made Li Shiyu extremely puzzled — why had he sneezed all of a sudden? As the dux of the military medical research specialization, he took every signal from his body very seriously...

However, since the exam said he was fine, being extremely busy, he very quickly cast this strange sneeze to back of his mind, once again immersing himself into the new treatment plans he had developed. He looked towards the two within the healing pods, mentally cackling in his heart. He would definitely let these two fellows have a good taste of the power of the gene agent S-modification!

At this time, he could not help but regret that Luo Lang had recovered too quickly. He had not expected Luo Lang to react differently to the gene agent S-modification. This surprised him immensely — it was unfortunate that Luo Lang's wounds were not that serious, so one tube of the gene agent S-modification had healed him for the most part, giving Li Shiyu no chance to use a second tube on him, thus causing him to lose one experimental subject.

Li Shiyu was on one side feeling sorry, while Luo Lang, on the other, was seeing the great benefits of that one tube of gene agent S-modification. Those training tasks which Luo Lang had been barely enduring before could actually now be completed



without him breaking a sweat. This let the various instructors in charge of physical conditioning set aside their worries. They had been afraid that Luo Lang would not be able to keep up after missing ten days of classes, affecting his final results in the end. Unexpectedly, after going through the arena fight, not only had Luo Lang's physical skills realm stabilised, his body constitution seemed to be much better than before. The instructors were thrilled by this...

Qi Long still had not recovered enough to return, Han Jijun and Lin Zhong-qing were in different specializations, while Boss Ling Lan had already received an exemption for the physical condition assessments and so did not attend physical training courses. Thus, over these past few days, Luo Lang was basically going to class and leaving class with Xie Yi.

On this day, Xie Yi and Luo Lang were just about to return together to the dormitories when Luo Lang was abruptly called out by a student on some matter. Initially, Luo Lang had wanted to ask Xie Yi to wait, but then, he suddenly received a notification from the treatment centre, telling him to hurry to the Military Medical Research Centre for a follow-up examination.

Luo Lang found it a little strange — back when he had recovered, Li Shiyu had said with a constipated expression that 'you can leave now, don't come here anymore!'. Why then would Li Shiyu call him back now for a follow-up?

Luo Lang wondered about this for a moment, but still decided to go once. Regardless of whether there was a follow-up, he would be able to find out what was going on by going there. Thus, he said goodbye to Xie Yi and left on his own.

Luo Lang came to the closest hover car stop near him and boarded a car. The military academy was just like a city of its own — relying on one's two legs to get to the centre would take one to two hours, so Luo Lang naturally chose the convenience of public transportation.

The hover car brought him all the way to the gates of the Military Medical Research Centre. He had just disembarked when a blue-uniformed senior rushed forward to greet him, asking, "Luo Lang, right?"

Luo Lang nodded and said, "Yes, that's me!"

"Dux Li asked me to take you straight to the examination centre. Please come with me."

The senior indicated for Luo Lang to follow him.

Luo Lang did not think much of it, following the blue-uniformed senior for a distance, where they then saw a hover car parked not too far from them. The senior explained, "The examination centre is rather far. To save time, we'll take a hover car there."

During the final stages of his treatment, Luo Lang had also been to the examination centre before. Thus, he knew that it was indeed quite a distance away, and so got into the car without any objection. The two of them split up to sit in the front and back row, with the senior seated in front. After the senior keyed in their destination into the hover car's A.I., the hover car swiftly raced off.

However, very soon, Luo Lang noticed something strange. The scenery passing outside the window was extremely unfamiliar, not at all like the route he had taken to the examination centre previously. Luo Lang's heart clenched and he asked, "This road doesn't seem to be going to the examination centre."

"Before going to the examination centre, I need to go to the dormitories first to collect an examination study report," said the blue-uniformed senior, turning his head back to smile apologetically, "This report has to be submitted to the examination centre today. I had originally planned to send it along with you, but I unexpectedly forgot to bring it with me when I left earlier. I'm sorry for making you accompany me for this extra trip, but don't worry, your scheduled examination time is half an hour later. My living quarters isn't far. We'll be able to rush back in time."

Hearing this, Luo Lang replied, "So that's how it is. I understand."

Though he said that, Luo Lang had already sensed something fishy about the situation. He began thinking back on the notification he had received earlier and this person who had come out to greet him. It was all actually quite puzzling — if he truly needed to have a follow-up examination, why would it be a staff member from the treatment centre who contacted him? Mind you, in order to track their recovery, Li Shiyu had taken down the contact numbers of all three of them, so Li Shiyu could have just sent the message to him personally...

Moreover, if he was supposed to go to the examination centre from the start, why didn't they ask him to go there directly? Why had they asked him to come to the Military Medical Research Centre first? The more Luo Lang thought about it, the more suspicious things seemed, so he said, "Why don't we do this, Senior? You go to your

dorm to retrieve your report, while I'll head to the examination centre first. Maybe Dux Li has some instructions, so it would be better for me to get there earlier. There should be another hover car stop in front. You can just let me down there."

The senior turned his head and said with a smile, "It's fine. Dux Li is not at the examination centre. This is just a routine examination. Once the report is out, it just needs to be sent to him."

With that, Luo Lang could already confirm that the other was definitely not sent by Li Shiyu. This was likely a ploy by some person or faction against him. He sifted carefully through his memories of this period of time since entering the academy — he had always trailed Qi Long, desperately working towards completing his physical training. He had no memory of offending anyone, so this scheme should not be directed at him personally... could it be that there was some other faction who wanted to target their New Cadet Regiment, thus wanting to take him as a hostage to threaten Boss Lan?

How could Luo Lang allow himself to be taken just like this? With that thought, he suddenly pointed towards the front, his complexion paling dramatically as he shouted, "Senior, what's that?"

The blue-uniformed senior quickly turned his head around to look, but saw nothing there. In his bewilderment, he suddenly felt a pain at the back of his head, his sight grew dark, and he fell over unconscious...

# Chapter 271

## Become Friends?

With a flip of his body, Luo Lang was at the front seat. He pulled out the information the other had keyed in earlier, trying to change their destination, but found that it had already been locked in by the other, with no way of changing it.

Of course, this was just a measure which would work against regular cadets like Luo Lang who were not in the hacker specialization. A competent hacker would still be able to crack this relatively basic lock, but unfortunately, Luo Lang did not have the skills on this front. He could only watch helplessly as the hover car flew towards the destination the other had set, unbelievably frustrated.

Luo Lang understood that to stop the travel route was impossible, unless he used violent means to destroy the hover car... but, extremely rationally, he rejected this idea, because the hover car was flying rapidly at an altitude of over 100 metres. The moment it was broken apart, he would plummet along with the car. At this height, no matter how confident Luo Lang was, he could not guarantee he would be able to land safely. If things did not work out, he might once again be gravely injured.

Luo Lang really did not want to end up in Li Shiyu's hands again. Although the other truly had superior skills in treatment, his methods of tormenting others were also extremely masterful. Most importantly, 'for your own good' was putting it nicely — you really had no way of resisting, and would even have to grudgingly thank him for the torment after the fact...

Besides that, Luo Lang also really wanted to know who the opponent was. An unknown enemy was most often the most fearsome and troublesome type. If he could find out some information on the opponent, it would undoubtedly be a great help to the New Cadet Regiment. More importantly, Luo Lang was also afraid that if he escaped this time, the opponent might turn their sights on the other members of the New Cadet Regiment. Other than Ling Lan, Qi Long, and Wu Jiong, Luo Lang's strength was obviously a bracket higher compared to the other members, and so his chances of escaping were also much better than any other member. For these reasons, Luo Lang decided to brave the tiger's den to probe the opponent's identity.

Having made his decision, Luo Lang no longer concerned himself with the hover car. He tied up the unconscious blue-uniformed senior by his side using the other's belt — the binding method naturally being the one Ling Lan had taught them — and then dumped the other in the backseat. Then, he stared straight ahead with a grim expression, silently trying to memorize the path of the hover car.

The hover car moved very swiftly. In less than 20 minutes, the hover car began to slow down from its initial rapid speed. Luo Lang readied his guard, because he knew he was about to arrive at the destination the opponent had set — the enemy was upon him.

Although the journey had taken less than 20 minutes, with the hover car's speed, they were likely to have already travelled over several hundred kilometres, already very far away from the Military Medical Research Centre. The surroundings were extremely unfamiliar to Luo Lang — towering mountains and dense forest were all around them. Besides the wailing cry of some unknown beast, the surroundings were so silent that it was rather unnerving. Luo Lang used the optical supercomputer of the hover car to zoom in on the environment, and found that other than mountains and trees, there were only more mountains and trees, no sign of human presence whatsoever.

Luo Lang's brow began to furrow tightly — he had originally thought that the hover car would bring them directly to the opponent's main camp, or perhaps a temporary outpost. Unexpectedly, he had been brought to such a bleak and remote area; this left Luo Lang at somewhat of a loss.

The hover car was slowing down more and more, even as its height was slowly descending. In the end, the hover car manoeuvred into a narrow gorge, and after passing through it, Luo Lang was greeted by the sight of an average-sized patch of grass. It was lush and verdant, with countless small blooms of myriad colours dotting this sheet of green, giving observers a sense of extraordinary beauty.

At the edge of the grassy patch was a sea of trees. Luo Lang could hear the sound of a babbling brook coming out from the trees, causing everything to seem that much more beautiful and harmonious. This made Luo Lang's initially high-strung vigilance ease a little, but only for a split second — Luo Lang very quickly had his guard up high once more, no longer lingering in his appreciation for that patch of lovely grass. Instead, he paid close attention to the movements of the hover car beneath him.

The hover car slowly moved onto the grass-patch and began to descend until it had landed fully. After that, the hover car emitted a mechanical voice, "You have reached

your destination. Please disembark."

Following this announcement, the car doors swung open. Luo Lang did not choose to get off, instead turning on the A.I. again, trying to see if he could enter a new address. In this extremely foreign place, Luo Lang's first move was to try to implement a Plan B — he wanted to set it so the hover car would automatically return from this place back to the dormitories after waiting for 10 minutes.

But very quickly, Luo Lang found that he had failed. The other had already thought of this possibility, and had programmed the A.I. to shut off on its own the moment the hover car arrived at its destination, switching into parked mode. It would not accept any new instructions from Luo Lang, so Luo Lang really had no choice but to remain.

Seeing this, Luo Lang could not help but be chilled by the opponent's attention to detail. It should be known that the hover cars of the military academy would never turn off their engines. They were powered by photonic energy — whether it was sunlight or starlight, all of it would give the hover cars power. Therefore, the hover cars could theoretically continue driving on forever, unless some other mechanical issue occurred or their A.I. programming malfunctioned.

Luo Lang knew that this situation now meant that the opponent must have a high-level hacker on their side, one capable of modifying the operating system of the hover car's A.I., thus forcing the car to power down automatically when it arrived at its destination.

This arrangement of the enemy forced Luo Lang to stay, because there was nothing at all around here <sup>1</sup> — no village-houses, no stores, no hover car stops... in other words, once someone came here, other than taking the hover car which had originally brought them here back, they would not be able to summon a new hover car over to pick them up, unless they used their communicators to request assistance from the academy mainframe...

Luo Lang was almost certain that his communicator would be unable to contact the outside world by now. The opponent had planned things so thoroughly, so it was unlikely they would have missed such a large hole in their plan.

Sure enough, when he peeked down at his communicator, his communicator was displaying an alert saying 'signal disrupted, device out of contact'. Who knew how long his device had been flashing that alert — Luo Lang's attention had just been

elsewhere, which was why he had not noticed till now.

Luo Lang knew that a tough fight was sure to follow. The opponent had set such an elaborate trap to draw him here, they would not just want to meet him for a chat. He sighed silently, getting off the hover car with his sense on high alert, stepping foot on this lovely patch of grass.

With his back to the hover car, he swept his gaze over the perimeter on all three sides before him. Seeing no one, he was frowning in puzzlement when he suddenly heard the sound of a hover car coming from behind him. Luo Lang snapped his head around and saw three hover cars flying swiftly towards him. In the end, the three cars circled around to surround him before they slowly descended to land.

Soon, 7 or 8 people had disembarked from the three hover cars. The person in the lead was dressed in a pressed white uniform, and he was smiling as he looked at Luo Lang. His figure was tall and stately, his face extraordinarily handsome — he definitely possessed the figure and appearance that Luo Lang dreamed of having — but his sparkling, flirty eyes disturbed Luo Lang. Those eyes just did not seem to fit the other's overall appearance somehow, resulting in a huge deduction in the overall sense of perfection.

The other youths were all dressed in blue uniforms. They looked to be about twenty years old, definitely senior cadets of the military academy; it was just hard to tell which year exactly they were from. They stood around almost randomly, but still keeping Luo Lang completely within their circle.

Luo Lang stared warily at the group. This behaviour of the other side let him know that these people were most definitely the ones who had tricked him here. The two sides stared at each other silently for 2 to 3 minutes, neither side saying a word.

Luo Lang clenched his teeth. From the looks of it, the opponent was not planning to speak up first. Thus, he decided to take the initiative. Looking towards the obvious leader of this group, the white-uniformed youth, who must be a dux of who knows what specialization, he asked coldly, "Was it you who set up this trap to bring me here?"

The white-clothed youth laughed and clapped his hands, "Bingo! How clever!"

"Bringing me here, what business do you have with me? I think, I have never seen you

before, so I should not have offended you somehow," Luo Lang said.

The white-clothed youth laughed again and said, "Haha, of course not! Actually, I just wanted to become friends with you."

Luo Lang scoffed at these words, "Become friends? Using this kind of despicable method?"

The white-clothed youth frowned, and said sullenly, "Could it be that Yong-guang <sup>2</sup> didn't tell you that I wanted to discuss something with you?"

"Using a text message to trick me into going to the Military Medical Research Centre, then using the excuse of an examination at the examination centre to trick me onto a hover car and bringing me here by force. What do you think?"

Hearing all this, the white-clothed youth said exasperatedly, "Yong-guang misunderstood my intentions! I just said that I especially admired your performance during the arena fight, actually being able to achieve an upset, defeating a stronger opponent. This deserves my respect. I most admire your type of resilient and tenacious spirit. So, I told him that if I had a chance, I'd like to get to know you, maybe become friends or something..."

At this point, the white-clothed youth began muttering to himself, "Yong-guang clearly said that he could help me do that... how did things turn out this way?" So saying, he abruptly raised his head and asked Luo Lang, "Where's Yong-guang? Let me ask him what exactly is going on? I had clearly asked him to invite you here. This place is my favourite spot. I thought you might like it too, which is why I arranged to meet you here."

The white-clothed youth's expression was earnest, as if the truth was just as he said. With that explanation, Luo Lang began to doubt whether things were really like that — was it this Yong-guang who had made a mistake?

However, Boss Lan's cautionary words very quickly rang out in his mind. *'When you are still uncertain whether an other is a friend or foe, you need to guard against the other as if they were an enemy... '*

Luo Lang's heart clenched, cold sweat breaking out along his back. Without knowing it, he had slowly been letting down his guard. He abruptly stared penetratingly at the seemingly earnest face of that white-clothed youth, and said coldly, "No need. He is my



hostage now. Why don't you tell me what you intend?"

Luo Lang's wary gaze made the lips of the white-clothed youth twitch, his gaze quickly becoming bleak as he said, "I really had no bad intentions." That said, he bowed his head somewhat mournfully.

"If you have no bad intentions, then help me unlock the settings of the hover car. It's getting late, I should go back now," responded Luo Lang coldly. No matter what the other said, he was determined not to believe it. Who would do such a bizarre thing as this just to make friends? It was suspicious however he looked at it.

Resigned, the white-clothed youth said, "Okay. I really don't know how things turned out this way. All of this was done by Yong-guang. You need to wake Yong-guang up, he should be able to resolve this."

Luo Lang peered intently at the white-clothed youth for a long moment. Then, without shifting his line of sight, his hand reached into the backseat of the hover car behind him, and smacked that person called Yong-guang awake.

## Chapter 272

# The Mission of the New Cadet Regiment!

Yong-guang moaned and opened his eyes. Waking to find himself all tied up, his face paled, but just as he was about to shout, he noticed his companions standing right outside the car. Joy bloomed on his face as he cried out, "Elder Brother Xi, save me!"

The white-clothed youth saw this and his face turned stony as he barked, "Yong-guang, I ask you. Didn't I say I wanted to become friends with Luo Lang? Asking you to help me invite him out for a meeting, why did you make such a mess of it?"

Yong-guang's gaze flickered. He looked towards Luo Lang, then looked back at the white-clothed youth, and after some thought, he said, "Honestly, I had wanted to invite Luo Lang out properly, but the companion by his side was very wary and cautious. Every time I tried to approach, that person would stop me. Even though I said I had no bad intentions, only wanting to get to know him, the other just would not believe me. In the end, I had no choice but to do things this way. I was originally thinking to explain the situation after we arrived at the destination, but I unexpectedly angered Luo Lang, who knocked me unconscious along the way."

At this point, Yong-guang bowed his head dejectedly and apologised, saying, "I'm sorry, Luo Lang, for misleading you."

"All of this was really just your idea?" Despite the other's explanation, he did not manage to make Luo Lang relax his guard. Luo Lang's right hand was still gripping the other's neck securely — at any strange movement, he would be able to finish off the other instantly. This action of his was also a silent warning to the other people there to not move recklessly, for he had a hostage in hand.

In response to Luo Lang's question, Yong-guang said, "Yes, I'm from the hacker specialization, so I could only use a hacker's method to invite you out." Yong-guang was rather proud of his own methods, but very quickly deflated again, "I was originally just thinking of using the Military Medical Research Centre's system to send you a message, but that system is just too hard to crack. In the end, I could only use the treatment centre's system. Luckily you did not suspect anything."

Yong-guang's words explained why he had received the message from the treatment centre; this rather convinced Luo Lang of the veracity of his words. However, he also began chiding himself internally — it was just as Boss Lan had said — he was all a fighter's brawn and courage, without a strategist's mind <sup>1</sup>. He had not noticed such a simple and obvious flaw... if not for the fact that the subsequent events had been too out of the ordinary, he might not have noticed right up till the very end.

Luo Lang made a decision then and there that he would definitely go find Han Jijyun when he had a chance for some remedial lessons. Even if he could not become someone as astute as Han Jijyun, he just could not let an opponent use such a simple scheme to lure him out. This was too disgraceful! He could already foresee the teasing he would receive from his companions when he returned.

"That hover car was also your doing?" Luo Lang continued to ask.

Yong-guang's downtrodden demeanour was swept away in an instant. Beaming with pride, he said, "Of course! All this is just a piece of cake <sup>2</sup>!" With regards to his own specialization, he was still very confident in his abilities.

The other's reactions chipped away a little more of Luo Lang's scepticism. As if aware that the ice on Luo Lang's face was thawing, the white-clothed youth immediately spoke up to say, "You see, Luo Lang, I really had no bad intentions. I just felt that we would click, so I wanted to get to know you." Saying this, there was actually a trace of hurt on the youth's face.

Seeing this, Luo Lang's heart could not help but soften, but Ling Lan's stern expression once more floated to the surface of his mind. That cold gaze of his pierced Luo Lang's inner heart, causing his heart to clench once more, causing him to once again harden his somewhat softening heart.

When the white-uniformed youth saw mental clarity reassert itself in Luo Lang's eyes once more, he could not help but jerk back, his initially wounded expression stiffening for just a moment...

Ling Lan, who was currently in the mecha world performing a mission, suddenly stopped moving, causing Little Four to ask in confusion, "Boss, what's wrong?"

"My spiritual power has been stirred!" Ling Lan answered with a frown.

"What happened?" Little Four was very shocked. He had not sensed any people with

spectre abilities near them in the virtual world; it was impossible for anyone to have attacked Boss.

"Could it be something from the virtual world?" Ling Lan asked Little Four. When it came to the virtual world, Little Four knew better than she did.

"No, there are no spectres within a hundred square li of us. Unless this world has another entity like me around, but even so, it should not be able to escape my sensors," replied Little Four with confidence.

Ling Lan's brow scrunched up even tighter. If it did not come from the virtual world, then where had this attack come from?

Right then, Ling Lan had already forgotten that, back during the grand armed melee, in order to protect Qi Long and the others, she had unleashed several strands of her spiritual power, lodging them within the minds of her team members. Back then, Ling Lan had been afraid they would get too caught up in fighting that they might make a wrong decision during a critical moment. Thus, she had left these spiritual power strands in their minds to jolt them into awareness again at those critical moments...

Originally, she was supposed to take those strands back once the grand armed melee ended. However, by virtue of the chain of events that had followed — her being targeted for an assassination, being seriously injured and unconscious and leaving for home, and then when she woke up, she was immediately taken in by Mu Shui-ying as a disciple to train in Divine Command — she had forgotten to seek out her companions to reclaim those spiritual power reserves of hers.

With the passage of time, these spiritual power strands had been absorbed by her companions' spiritual power, becoming part of them. However, there was an unintended benefit — whenever her companions were attacked by a spiritual power user, Ling Lan would sense it. At present though, Ling Lan did not know about this, which was why she was extremely puzzled over the source of this attack.

"I need to log off. Something just doesn't feel right." Ling Lan decided to listen to her gut, immediately logging off from the virtual world.



Inside the villa of Ling Lan's team, one room on the third floor was specially used for

the login pods to the virtual world. The moment Xie Yi returned to the team home, he immediately ran to the third floor. As long as it was not during meal time, Boss Lan, Luo Lang, and the others would be in the virtual world, and Xie Yi needed to find Boss Lan before Luo Lang heard of this matter to discuss how they could advise Luo Lang to accept the mission set by the military academy this time.

It turned out that ten days later would be the first assessment for the 5th year seniors who applied to the various army divisions for enlistment. It could be said that this would certainly affect the futures of those students, as well as affect the reputation of the First Men's Military Academy.

This was because those students who passed this first assessment would obtain the best resources the divisions had to offer and gain the best cultivation, and be deployed to the best troop for their development. In comparison, the assessments after that would not provide such great treatment anymore. This was why all the military academies would put their all into doing their best for this first assessment.

The assessment teams sent by the various army divisions would not only come to the First Men's Military Academy, but would also set up station at several other military academies. Those locations would gather all the enlistment hopefuls from the other military academies for assessment — the competition could be said to be extremely fierce. Thus, every year, the military academies placed the greatest importance on this very first assessment. It should be known that, in the past, the students of the First Men's Military Academy would dominate half the passing group. This was why the First Men's Military Academy had always reigned supreme over the other military academies.

The First Men's Military Academy naturally hoped to continue extending their reign of good repute, hence placing a high standard on all aspects of the assessment teams' visit. The school hoped to have everything as perfect as possible, so it could leave a good impression on all the assessment officers of the various army divisions, in hopes that the officers would be merciful during the assessment of their students. Meanwhile, the most essential piece was the welcoming reception...

As the First Men's Military Academy consisted entirely of manly men, the school could not do as other co-ed military academies did, sending out beautiful ladies to receive the officers. This time, they received news that their sworn rivals, the Federal Co-ed Military Academy had sent out the so-called loveliest female squad to welcome the officers. This made the top ranks of the First Men's Military Academy extremely

agitated.

If they still sent out some rough and hairy boys to welcome the officers this time, with this stark contrast, would the examiners be irritated? Thinking that this could affect their cadets' results, their hearts were burning with desperation, as they racked their brains to think of a counterplan <sup>3</sup>. Heaven knows who suggested it, but someone mentioned that there were some among the boys who were graceful and beautiful too, such as the 1st year Luo Lang. (Due to his participation in the wagered fight, quite a few people knew of Luo Lang now. Even the top ranks of the school administration had caught wind of him.) The administrators latched onto this suggestion like their lives depended on it, swiftly settling on seeking out some of the more refined and gentle-looking youths to handle this matter.

In the end, after some study, everyone decided that the 1st year freshmen were still the most suited for this job. The freshmen were innocent, not as slick as the older cadets — so if they really ended up making any faux pas, on account of their young ages, those officers would likely be able to overlook it.

Finally, this matter was handed over to the New Cadet Regiment to execute. Who asked Luo Lang to be a member of the New Cadet Regiment? Moreover, the New Cadet Regiment was the only organisation the freshmen of this year would acknowledge — who else would the administrators seek out if not them?

Xie Yi had been called out by a student for precisely this reason. Their first year homeroom teacher had asked that student to pass on the word, calling Xie Yi to the homeroom teacher's office. (Ever since Qi Long and Li Yingjie had been injured, Xie Yi had temporarily taken their place to become Wu Jiong's assistant, helping Wu Jiong to handle the matters of the New Cadet Regiment, which was why the teacher would seek out Xie Yi.)

The moment Xie Yi arrived at the homeroom teacher's office, he saw Wu Jiong there as well, giving him a hint that this was likely regarding the New Cadet Regiment. Reality proved that Xie Yi was right. The homeroom teacher plainly told them the intentions of the top ranks of the military academy, tasking the New Cadet Regiment with the job of receiving the examiners. Additionally, he kept subtly and pointedly bringing up how excellent Luo Lang was, strongly suggesting that it would be most appropriate for him to lead the welcoming committee.

Wu Jiong and Xie Yi could only smile wryly — the homeroom teacher's words had let

them understand clearly what the top file of the military academy was after. They had set their hopes on the lovely androgynous face of Luo Lang... However, Luo Lang had always hated others judging him by that feminine face of his. The two of them really had no idea what Luo Lang would do when he found out about the administrators' plan. Would he go berserk and flip the principal's desk in anger?

After that meeting, the two of them discussed things over, and felt that Boss Lan was likely the only person who could handle Luo Lang for this. Thus, Xie Yi had rushed back to the villa and straight up to the third floor to find Ling Lan.

Xie Yi had just stepped into the login pod room when he saw Boss Lan's exclusive login pod swing open. Ling Lan sat up primly, prepared to climb out of the login pod.

Seeing this, Xie Yi said happily, "Boss Lan, I was just looking for you to discuss something." That said, Xie Yi shuffled over to lift up Ling Lan's towel from the counter and passed it to Ling Lan.

"What's up?" Ling Lan smoothly accepted Xie Yi's offering of her towel, and began walking as she asked. She was moving towards the restroom to one side, prepared to wash up.

# Chapter 273

## Where Is Luo Lang?

Xie Yi quickly hurried over and said, "It's like this..." He explained the task the military academy had set for the New Cadet Regiment to Ling Lan, "The top rank of the academy has set their sights on Luo Lang, wanting Luo Lang to be in charge of the reception team. The intention being that those going to welcome the examiners should be those who are more on the graceful and slender side."

The hand Ling Lan was using to wipe her face with her towel paused for a beat, then swiped roughly once more as she said with a cold chuckle, "That bunch of top ranks must have something wrong with their brains. The assessment officers of the divisions are here to see brave and skilful warriors, not this superficial nonsense."

Xie Yi nodded emphatically, "Right? Wu Jiong and I felt right then that something was off, but before we could refuse, the instructor had implied that this was a mission the New Cadet Regiment must carry out."

"Unable to refuse?" asked Ling Lan, her eyebrows locking up. She really disliked this mission — Luo Lang would likely be extremely resistant to this mission as well.

"If we could refuse, we would have pushed it off a long time ago. The instructor said that, as long as we complete this mission, the school will guarantee that within one year, no other faction will bother us." Xie Yi shared the benefit the school was promising as well, though this was of course still a type of threat.

"Hmph, faking generosity by piggybacking others. They know very well that Leiting will help us settle everything in these two years. Actually just promising this, what great planning," commented Ling Lan with a cold huff. She threw her towel into the washbasin and strode out of the washroom.

Xie Yi hurriedly rushed forward to clean the towel in the washbasin a little, wringing it dry and hanging it back in its place, as he replied, "Right? But with the school's promise, some factions might make less underhanded moves behind the scenes." Leiting would only help them resolve the conflicts on the surface, so the New Cadet Regiment would still have to handle any manoeuvres behind the scenes themselves.



In this half a month after the waged fight, there had indeed been no disturbances on the surface, but behind the scenes, the regiment members had still received taunting and bullying to a certain extent. It was just that the perpetrators seemed to have no clear connection to any of the factions, seeming to be acting purely on personal grudges. But Wu Jiong and Xie Yi knew very well that things were not that simple. Simply staying on top of all these miscellaneous trivial matters had given them a lot of stress. Thus, this vow of the military academy was still rather attractive for the New Cadet Regiment.

"If our New Cadet Regiment is given a stable year's time, allowing the regiment members to successfully complete their final exams, in the second year, we will no longer have to be afraid," added Wu Jiong.

This kind of backstage harassment might not bother the top ranks of the New Cadet Regiment much, but they were still extremely detrimental to the lower ranking members. Mind you, the first year was the most critical physical conditioning phase, which was of the utmost importance to every freshman. If they did not have a secure environment to complete these physical training courses, it might affect their final assessment results. This was why Wu Jiong and Xie Yi had agreed to the mission in the end — for the sakes of their regiment members, it was necessary for them to suffer some things.

Ling Lan walked over to sit on a sofa at one side. As she listened to Xie Yi, she could not help but knock on the arms of the sofa, thinking for a long while before saying, "Looks like, Luo Lang will have to take one for the team." This statement sealed Luo Lang's tragic fate for the near future.

At these words, Xie Yi's expression eased. He took a seat on the sofa beside Ling Lan's and sighed, "He'll just have to. For the sake of our New Cadet Regiment's future!" That said, he added obsequiously, "Of course, this matter still requires you, Boss Lan, to act. Luo Lang listens to you best."

Ling Lan threw a cold glance at him in response, frightening Xie Yi so much that he quickly ducked his head, afraid to make eye contact.

Frankly, they had only called on Boss Lan to act because they had no other choice. That punk Luo Lang may look as soft and gentle as water, but he was actually a firecracker, liable to explode with a tiny spark. If they tried passing on the news themselves, they might only manage to touch on the subject — before they managed to elaborate and

clarify the whole mission, Luo Lang might already have flipped the table in anger.

However, Boss Lan was different. Luo Lang adored Boss Lan, and listened well to Boss Lan's words. If it came from Boss Lan, regardless of how unhappy Luo Lang was with the news, he would still obey docilely and complete the mission perfectly. This was why Wu Jiong and Xie Yi would seek out Ling Lan for help.

At the heart of it, whether it was those of Ling Lan's team or those of the New Cadet Regiment, they all had a kind of unquestionable trust in Ling Lan. In their minds, as long as a task was taken on by Boss Lan, any challenge would no longer be challenging... what blind confidence they had in Ling Lan!

Seeing Xie Yi's cowed expression, Ling Lan turned her gaze aside and said dispassionately, "Only this once." Ling Lan did not wish for them to develop the habit of relying on her. There would come a day when they would go their separate ways and fight on their own.

At these words, Xie Yi finally smiled. With Boss Lan's promise, this matter was sure to go off without a hitch. He decided that he would inform Wu Jiong right after this, and ask him to select some of the more genteel looking freshmen with refined manners, to cooperate with Luo Lang in completing this mission.

At this moment, Ling Lan was also mentally considering what to do. She did not want to be a tyrant boss, assigning missions to her followers by force without caring what they thought. She wanted to ask Luo Lang's opinion — if Luo Lang was at all reluctant, she decided that she would go forth together with Luo Lang to complete this welcoming mission.

Ling Lan knew very well that if she too was in the welcoming committee, Luo Lang would definitely have no more mental resistance to the mission, and would instead follow her enthusiastically. Besides, as a girl, Ling Lan did not feel there was anything disgraceful about accepting this mission <sup>1</sup>.

Ling Lan would make this decision because she felt that she herself matched the conditions the top ranks of the academy had set for the welcoming committee. With the union of her parents' strengths, when she looked into a mirror, even she could not help but be enchanted by her own lovely face...

Indeed, Ling Lan was pretty good-looking, and her slender frame had none of the

bulky muscularity of the typical male. By all accounts, she indeed fit the criteria very well, but she had forgotten her own millennium-long unmelting ice block of a face, as well as her piercing gaze which chilled others to the bone. Just standing there, she exuded a boundless air of domination... how then could she possess the gentle and accommodating air the upper ranks of the military academy requested?

It had to be said that Ling Lan was actually quite tragic — having such a lovely face, but no one dared to even look straight at her... The domineering air coming from her body completely overshadowed her unbelievably beautiful face. At first glance, all everyone could think was that this person was really cool, really strong, really dominant! Forever unrelated to the phrases beautiful, pretty, or adorable...

After thinking about it, Ling Lan decided to first discuss things over with Luo Lang to see what the other thought. So, she asked Xie Yi, "Where's Luo Lang? Why didn't he come back together with you?"

Xie Yi was taken aback. "Luo Lang told me he would leave first. Did he not come back here?" He quickly stood up and ran to Luo Lang's login pod to take a look. There really was no one inside. Xie Yi instantly frowned and said, "This fellow, where has he gone?"

Ling Lan also frowned. Luo Lang typically would not run around needlessly — could it be that something had popped up? Ling Lan rapped on the arm of the sofa once more and said, "Tell me the situation when you last saw Luo Lang."

Xie Yi carefully recalled the scene for a moment, then replied, "I had originally asked Luo Lang to wait for me, because the homeroom teacher passed a message for me to meet him at his office. Luo Lang had said yes at first, but then, soon after, he said he had something to do and asked to leave first. Since I did not know what the homeroom teacher wanted, or how long it would take, I agreed. After saying goodbye to him, I went to the homeroom teacher, while Luo Lang left the training field."

"Initially agreeing to wait for you, but then saying that he had something to do and leaving... this means that within that brief window of time, there was a change in Luo Lang's state of mind," Ling Lan analysed.

"Yes, I wonder if Luo Lang suddenly recalled something, or did something happen within that period of time to change his mind?" Xie Yi mused. Suddenly thinking of something, his face paled and he said, "Could he have been tricked away by that person?"

Ling Lan's face darkened. "What's this?"

Xie Yi quickly told Ling Lan all about the senior who had been constantly trying to find a way to approach Luo Lang over the past few days. Back then, he had already found the other rather fishy, which was why he had actively stopped him. However, the other's intentions were extremely concealed, so all he had were speculations, hence he had not spoken to Luo Lang of it. At this point, Xie Yi was filled with regret. He should have warned Luo Lang earlier to be careful.

"Luo Lang is not that foolish. A stranger would not be able to trick him away so easily. There must be some reason which he could not refuse..." Ling Lan did not think Luo Lang was that gullible. Even if Luo Lang was indeed all dumb innards behind an intelligent face <sup>2</sup>, he still did not lack basic judgment.

"Wait here for a moment. I'll log onto the virtual network to see if I can find any useful information." Ling Lan decided to depend on Little Four for this, lying back down into the virtual login pod. She was prepared to let Little Four use the virtual network to look up the various surveillance stations in the military academy, to see where Luo Lang had gone.

Xie Yi nodded, settling down quietly onto the sofa. No matter how anxious he was, he did not make any sound. He knew what Ling Lan was heading into the virtual world to do — their entire team knew that Boss Lan was most likely also a very high-level hacker — perhaps Boss would be able to find some clue within the virtual world.



Meanwhile, Luo Lang, who was facing off against a crowd, had not let down his guard due to the warning jolt he had received from Ling Lan's spiritual power. After listening to what the white-clothed youth had to say, he contemplated silently for a moment before replying, "I really want to believe what you're saying, but I cannot under these circumstances. If what you say is true, then unseal the hover car and let me go home."

The white-clothed youth responded sadly, "Luo Lang, is it really impossible for us to become friends?"

At these words, Luo Lang laughed. This laugh was unbelievably lovely and charming, causing the white-clothed youth's gaze to darken briefly, becoming deep and unfathomable, but his loss of composure only lasted for a split second. Not thinking

too much about this, Luo Lang missed this swift change.

Luo Lang said amidst his laughter, "If you really want to be friends with me, come find me openly. I will not reject someone who sincerely wants to become friends."

The white-clothed youth instantly broke out into a smile, making his face incomparably sunny and bright. This caused Luo Lang's impression of him to rise by several notches once more. Still, even so, his vigilance was not reduced — that cold and piercing gaze of Ling Lan's made him fear to relax.

"Yup, I'll let Yong-guang unseal the hover car then. I'll come find you tomorrow, is that okay?" said the white-clothed youth with his sunny smile, his tone extremely earnest and sincere. Perhaps he was too earnest, for no matter how one looked, he exuded an air of silliness.

Luo Lang only continued to smile politely without saying a word, waiting for the other to fulfil his promise.

# Chapter 274

## Tianji Mecha Clan!

Yong-guang heard what the white-clothed youth said, and could not help but smile bitterly and say, "Being all tied up like this, how can I unseal anything? At least untie my hands." He turned his head to look at Luo Lang and said, "Since Elder Brother Xi has already said this, why don't you untie my hands so I can help you unseal the hover car?"

The white-clothed youth's gaze settled on Luo Lang's body once more, filled with anticipation.

Luo Lang hesitated briefly — he saw the three other hover cars not too far off and an idea sparked. "No need to unseal this one. Aren't there three perfectly fine cars over there? If you don't mind, let one of them take me back!"

The white-clothed youth nodded at this and said "Don't mind, of course I don't mind! You can choose whichever of the three hover cars you like."

Luo Lang smiled, but did not point out which car he wanted. He carefully lifted Yong-guang, using him as a hostage to block his body, carefully retreating. When he was not too far away from the three hover cars, he jumped backwards abruptly, leaping to the side of one of the hover cars. Pulling the door open, he continued to keep Yong-guang as a shield before him as he slowly retreated into the car.

Luo Lang sat down, and seeing the other side still standing where they were without moving a single step, he could not help but relax. It looked like they truly had no ill intent — his tightly clenched hand loosened.

Right then, Yong-guang, who had been docilely cooperative all this while, sensed the weakening of the grip around his neck. With a forceful twist of his body, he wrested free of Luo Lang's grasp, throwing himself bodily towards the ground...

Luo Lang was greatly startled, but just as he was about to lean out of the car to reach out for the other, he suddenly heard an extremely soft mechanical click. At the same time, a beam of silver light flashed right in front of his eyes.

Luo Lang felt an unprecedented sense of danger coming right at him, and the muscles of his entire body tensed up. Many years of battle experience ensured he did not panic — with a sweep of his right leg, he kicked out at Yong-guang who was about to hit the floor, sending him flying into the air. Meanwhile, he used the rebound force of this kick to glide swiftly deeper into the hover car, trying to dodge that threatening silver light.

Quicker than words could say, despite Luo Lang's nimble reflexes, he still did not manage to overcome the speed of the silver light. Luo Lang did not manage to dodge cleanly. The silver beam grazed Luo Lang's right shoulder, drawing a streak of blood, which swiftly dyed Luo Lang's green uniform red.

Luo Lang ignored the wound on his arm — as he had glided into the hover car, he had hooked the car door with his right leg, shutting it, and Luo Lang then quickly pressed down the lock button from the inside, sealing the car. Other than the person inside, anyone outside who wanted to open the car would need to use brute force now.

After doing all this, Luo Lang calmly activated the A.I. of the hover car. Right now, he prayed that he would be able to successfully activate the hover car and escape from this place before the opponent managed to destroy the hover car. By now, no matter how dumb Luo Lang was, he still knew he had fallen into the opponent's trap. That white-clothed youth had been lying through his teeth, and was certainly not as pure and earnest as he had portrayed himself to be. Luo Lang secretly hated himself for being taken in so easily by the opponent, actually beginning to like the other. That was why he had become distracted at the end, wasting all his efforts thus far, getting injured by the other's underhanded methods.

Luo Lang decided to remember this bloody lesson — next time, he definitely would not make such an idiotic mistake ever again...

Outside the hover car, a youth dressed in a blue uniform, mostly shielded from view by the white-clothed youth, lowered his hands in frustration. In his hands was an extremely exquisite, well-crafted, pocket-sized crossbow, and that streak of silver light had been a pocket-sized bolt fired from the crossbow.

He pulled back the crossbow, frowning as he said, "Elder Brother Xi, what do we do now?" Who could have expected that Luo Lang would be able to react so quickly even when he had attacked so abruptly, actually managing to dodge...

The white-uniformed youth glared broodily at the tightly locked hover car, and sniffed

coldly. "What else can we do? Smash it! I don't believe he can escape my grasp."

He was standing at the fore, so he had seen very clearly. When the bolt had brushed by Luo Lang, some blood had been drawn, so the bolt must have injured Luo Lang. He believed that, based on the compound on the bolt, as long as the other was wounded, it would be enough to force the other to stay.

"Yes, Brother Xi!" Receiving their instructions, the others began to move swiftly. They all ran towards the other two hover cars, taking out the metal bats they had prepared from within the cars. The military academy kept a close watch on firearms, forbidding students from using those highly volatile and damaging weapons outside of their classes. Thus, students would always use this type of metal bats in their personal scuffles.

Seated inside the hover car, Luo Lang watched nervously as the A.I. booted up. He could already sense those people outside surrounding this hover car. Very soon, the clanging sounds of impact rang out from all sides of the hover car. Luo Lang knew the opponent was trying to break the hover car by force, trying to keep him behind.

Time was tight — Luo Lang was so nervous his forehead was sweating. His eyes were locked onto the screen of the optical supercomputer; with all his attention focused on the screen, he neglected the trace of numbness that had appeared in his own right arm.

When the supercomputer finally displayed the notification to enter his intended destination, Luo Lang was overjoyed. As long as he managed to enter the address, he would be able to get the hover car to bring him away from this place... he was just about to lift his hand to key in the information when he found that he could not move his right arm. His heart clenched in fear, but before he could investigate why, he felt his vision blur, his head becoming groggy and heavy.

Not good! Ultra-effective anaesthetics! Luo Lang naturally knew what was behind this. It went without question that that silver bolt which had injured him must have had ultra-effective anaesthetic smeared on it, otherwise he would not have presented with its effects so quickly.

Luo Lang unhesitatingly bit down on the tip of his tongue. Riding this violent jolt of pain, he collected his quickly dissipating consciousness. He had to key in the address he needed to get to in these final moments of awareness.



His right arm was already completely numb, so Luo Lang gritted his teeth, using momentous effort to raise his limp and weak left hand. He began to key in the address of his dorm, and then pressed the button to confirm. When he saw the A.I. display the following message — Destination: XXXXX; please press 'YES' to confirm, press 'NO' to cancel — Luo Lang used almost all his strength to press down firmly on the 'YES' button, and then he fainted dead away.



In the virtual world, Little Four was displaying every digital footprint Luo Lang had left after leaving the training hall one by one before Ling Lan.

*16:09, Luo Lang received a message from the treatment centre. Contents as below: Cadet Luo Lang, please present yourself at the Medical Treatment Research Centre this afternoon at 17:00 hours for a final follow-up examination. — Main Service Counter of the Treatment Centre.*

*16:15, Luo Lang rode a hover car to the Medical Research Centre.*

*16:52, Luo Lang appeared at the entrance of the Medical Research Centre and met up with someone in a blue uniform.*

*16:58, Luo Lang went off with the blue-clothed person in a hover car; search for destination in progress...*

At this point, Ling Lan's eyebrows were tightly knitted. "Which goes to say that we still can't find where Luo Lang is now?"

"The hover car has been modified by a hacker. The destination keyed into it has not been recorded into the mainframe databank. For me to find out now, I need to find that hover car which Luo Lang took from all the surveillance footage. This is a little harder and will take more time." With regards to professional questions, Little Four's answers were meticulous.

"Alright, Little Four, take your time." Although Ling Lan was rather anxious, she did not want to show it and give Little Four too much pressure.

Not too long after, Little Four chimed in again. "Lu Yong-guang, 3rd year elite student from the hacker specialization..." Little Four had discovered the identity of that blue-

uniformed person with Luo Lang.

"Is he involved with any faction or group?" asked Ling Lan spiritedly.

"According to the data in the mainframe, he had joined the Tianji Mecha Clan." Little Four very quickly gave her an answer. The military academy mainframe which all hackers found so difficult to penetrate was just like his personal backyard in Little Four's eyes. He could come and go as he pleased, and the information inside it was as if part of his home, free for him to take as he willed.

"Tianji?" Ling Lan's brow furrowed at these words. Ever since Leiting Mecha Clan had lost in the waged fight, the various factions had toned down significantly. They were afraid they would accidentally offend Leiting, giving Leiting some excuse to vent their anger on them instead. If this matter was really initiated by Tianji, why had they chosen to act during this sensitive period? Could they be trying to take advantage of the instability to knock down Leiting and become the number one faction themselves? Or was this perhaps a setup by some other faction, trying to pit the New Cadet Regiment against Tianji? So that faction could then benefit as the external third party as the two clashed and weakened each other?

There were countless suppositions in Ling Lan's mind. Although she could not be sure whether Tianji was the real culprit, she would not let the other go, so she asked, "Little Four, without affecting the search for Luo Lang, can you take control of all the surveillance equipment inside the Tianji headquarters?"

Little Four replied without skipping a beat, "Piece of cake. Leave it to me!" He had barely finished speaking when an additional window had appeared before Ling Lan's eyes. There was a garden, a living room, other rooms, and also various passages and corridors. Ling Lan knew that this was most likely the inside of the Tianji Mecha Clan headquarters. As expected, when it came to any surveillance equipment being used in this era, Little Four really had no difficulty at all infiltrating it.

Not every faction had a headquarters — only the organisations which ranked within the top four of the school ranking had this honour. The military academy would allocate official venues of different sizes to the groups according to their ranking to become their headquarters. Therefore, every year, the various factions would be embroiled in a brutal competition in order to win one of these four spots on the ranking.

The Tianji Mecha Clan was the second major faction within the military academy, so the headquarters given to them was considerably huge. All the safety and security measures were done up extremely well, and from the video feed, Ling Lan could even see some patrols passing by every so often.

However, Ling Lan was only perusing it cursorily — her main priority was still in waiting for Little Four to come up with his final tracking results.

Time passed bit by bit. Not too long after, Han Jijyun and Lin Zhong-qin too had ended their physical training classes and returned. When they heard the news, Han Jijyun asked Xie Yi to contact Wu Jiong. They waited patiently in the living room, waiting for Ling Lan to exit from the virtual world.

As the skies grew darker and darker, they began to become a little restless. Boss Lan had not logged off after so long — did this mean that he had not found anything useful in the virtual world?

Xie Yi was the first to lose his patience — after all, Luo Lang had last been with him. If he had only been more alert back then and cautioned Luo Lang, perhaps this kind of thing would not have happened. Filled with remorse, he suggested whether they should mobilise the New Cadet Regiment, sending everyone out to look for Luo Lang together.

Wu Jiong was rather stirred by the suggestion — after all, he felt unsettled just sitting here doing nothing.

# Chapter 275

## Act Independently!

Han Jijyun was unexpectedly cool-headed, immediately shooting down the two's plan.

Han Jijyun believed that taking reckless action while the circumstances were still unclear would just scare off the villains before they could go after them, and may even make the situation worse. If the opponent became wary and transferred Luo Lang to an even more concealed area, it would make it even harder for them to find him. If this allowed the opponent to successfully hide Luo Lang away for a month's time, even if they managed to find Luo Lang eventually, Luo Lang's future would already be ruined by the opponent. Rather than that, they might as well wait patiently for Boss Lan to emerge before making a decision.

The final exams of the military academy every year were extremely stringent — skipping classes without reason for an entire month would cause a cadet to lose their study right. Many factions would use some underhanded means to steal talent for themselves — kidnapping was one of those methods, but it was used very, very rarely. After all, monitoring them all from above was the surveillance team of the military academy, which kept watch on all the factions and organisations on record within the school. Other than those who were confident they could carry it off flawlessly, the typical faction would not choose to use this method.

The New Cadet Regiment group seated here already had an inkling that Luo Lang had most likely been kidnapped — they just did not know whether it was a personal act, or if some faction or group was behind it...

This matter caused the mood of the New Cadet Regiment group here to be a little low. Originally, they had all been the elite princes of the Central Scout Academy, growing up smoothly without much hardship along the way. Under Ling Lan's lead, they had not met many obstacles, and though they had been forced into a wagered fight the moment they had entered the military academy, even when everyone had not thought well of their chances, they had prevailed. They had managed to turn the tables around and defeat the Leiting Mecha Clan...

It could not be denied that they had begun to become proud, their confidence going

off the charts, thinking that there were no factions which could prevent the New Cadet Regiment from rising to prominence. However, it was right at this time that Luo Lang had mysteriously gone missing from right beneath their noses. This was like a basin of cold water pouring down on them, causing them to understand that the waters of the military academy were still deeper than they realised. It was still much too early for them to strut around with their tails cocked up high.

"Thump! Thump! Thump!..." From upstairs, there came the rhythmic, hard sounds of boots striding across the ground, steady and powerful, causing the initially somewhat flustered hearts of those people seated below to settle down. Almost simultaneously, they all stood up and turned their heads to look. A familiar figure was walking down the stairs. Their gazes lit up instantly, the embers of hope flickering in their eyes.

Ling Lan walked down the stairs with an ice cold expression. Seeing the lot of them, she instructed, "Wu Jiong, you all wait here. Pretend nothing has happened..." Even though Ling Lan's tone was as dispassionate as usual, everyone there could sense the indistinct killing intent radiating from Ling Lan's body, a surge of chilly air penetrating straight into their hearts.

Boss Lan was pissed! Everyone understood tacitly what this meant.

Wu Jiong blinked blankly, but quickly figured things out and said, "Understood, Boss Lan!"

Han Jijyun frowned, a trace of worry flashing through his eyes, and asked, "Boss Lan, you plan to act independently?"

"Yes, I have already found Luo Lang's trail, but that location is unsuitable for group activity. Going alone, it'll be easier for me to rescue Luo Lang," explained Ling Lan.

"Who's the opponent?" Xie Yi suddenly spoke up to ask, his eyes brimming with fiery anger.

"The Tianji Mecha Clan!" Ling Lan bit out each word by word. Her suppressed rage exploded as she uttered these four words, and her right hand reflexively slammed down onto the handrail of the staircase. There was a snap, and the solid wooden railing was actually broken into two pieces by Ling Lan's angry palm.

Han Jijyun's expression could not help but pale drastically at the sight. "Boss Lan, has Luo Lang been harmed?"

Following this question, all the expressions of the others changed greatly as well. Several pairs of furious eyes stared at Ling Lan, hoping he would tell them the answer.

Ling Lan gritted her teeth and said, "Not yet for now. But this does not guarantee that it won't happen later. Thus, I have to hurry over as soon as possible..."

Ling Lan glanced at Wu Jiong, Han Jijyun and the others, and ordered, "Wu Jiong, Jijyun, I leave this place to you two. No matter what happens, you two must hold the fort. Remember, our New Cadet Regiment knows nothing, and no one has gone out... as for Luo Lang, he has only gone to the Medical Research Centre for an examination."

After leaving her instructions, Ling Lan rapidly departed the villa without a backwards glance, very quickly disappearing into the night.

Wu Jiong retracted his gaze, turning his head to ask Han Jijyun, "Han Jijyun, say, what do you think Boss Lan is planning to do?"

Han Jijyun indicated for the rest to return to the main hall to sit on the sofa, asking Lin Zhong-qing to bring over a pack of cards for them to while away the time, then replied, "Tragedy is about to befall the Tianji Mecha Clan..."

"Huh?" Wu Jiong had only guessed that Ling Lan was planning to execute a solo rescue, so he could not understand why Ling Lan did not want to let others know that it was the Tianji Mecha Clan who had abducted Luo Lang.

Han Jijyun merely shook his head, not planning to enlighten Wu Jiong. This made Wu Jiong restless, impatience and annoyance stirring in his heart, causing him to play his cards in a distracted manner.

Xie Yi was in fact similarly uncertain, but he knew his place and so did not think too hard on the matter. Thus, he was not as unsettled as Wu Jiong. In the end, it was still Lin Zhong-qing who could not bear to see Wu Jiong's sorry state, and could not help but hint, "If no one knows that Luo Lang was abducted by the Tianji Mecha Clan, then there will also be no way to prove that the one who wiped out the Tianji headquarters today is our Boss Lan..."

Wu Jiong's eyes lit up. "So that's how it is." However, he very quickly became despondent, pointing out the flaw in the logic, "But there are surveillance equipment in every area of the military academy..."

Han Jijyun smirked coldly, "And how much of Boss Lan's methods do you know? If Boss Lan wants you to do this, then you do this. This won't be a mistake."

Wu Jiong suddenly recalled their time on the spaceship — Boss Lan had successfully taken control of the surveillance equipment before then. His gaze brightened once more and he shouted, "I've got it!"

This cry drew the cold glares of the other three there with him. Han Jijyun, in particular, looked at him disdainfully as he mocked, "If you understand, then be quiet about it. Do you want to draw everyone here and negate Boss Lan's alibi?"

Wu Jiong did not become angry even though he had been mocked by Han Jijyun. Since his doubts had been answered, he could now play his cards with an easy mind...



Meanwhile, the moment Ling Lan exited the doorway, she asked Little Four within the mindscape, *"Tianji headquarters, which way is it?"*

Little Four showed a map to her instantly, with an arrow marking Ling Lan's current location and a red flag marking the position of their target. The information was clear with just one glance. He also spoke up to say, *"I suggest you first take a hover car ride, and then choose a stop near them to get off. This way, you can save some strength and internal energy..."* Little Four knew what Ling Lan was going to do on this trip, so he wanted to help Ling Lan reduce the drain on her energy. After all, destroying a headquarters was a laborious task — they should save whatever energy they could while they could.

Ling Lan decided to listen to Little Four's advice. With just one step, she had travelled over 100 metres away, arriving at the closest hover car stop to her living quarters in two steps. Then, she waited for a hover car to arrive. Even if she would use her Qi-Jin sparingly for now, time was still of the essence. She did not hope to see Luo Lang being tormented at this final juncture.

The hover car arrived quickly, and Ling Lan darted into it like a spirit. Before Ling Lan could key in anything, Little Four had taken the initiative to choose a stop about 1 kilometre away for Ling Lan, concealing his command from the system at the same time.

In the mainframe of the military academy, this hover car Ling Lan was riding was still an empty car floating around the school. Furthermore, the moment when Ling Lan had gotten into the car and the period later when she got out would also be altered on the surveillance records. Of course, Little Four's tampering was perfect — no one would ever notice any trace of modification...

Just like that, with no witnesses or material proof, Ling Lan left her own villa.



In one of the rooms within Tianji headquarters, the white-uniformed youth suppressed the intense pain coming from his body, and swallowed the ultra-effective medication his subordinate had brought for him.

"Brother Xi, are you alright?" A blue-uniformed person asked worriedly.

"I bloody didn't expect that Luo Lang to have such powerful spiritual power, able to resist my ability," hissed the white-clothed youth sullenly, "Not only that, he lashed back, wounding me."

The other had clearly lowered his guard and believed his words... why had he regained mental clarity at the final moment? It was then that he had been injured — if he had not held back from showing any signs of pain, the other might have seen through his act immediately. And also perhaps because he had forced himself to tolerate that rebound force in silence, the injury he had received was 30% worse than it would have been originally.

"Wait till I've healed completely. I'll definitely torment that fellow properly." A savage expression emerged on the white-clothed youth's face, utterly ruining his originally rather charming face, leaving behind only ugliness beyond measure.

"Congratulations, Brother Xi. Not only have you obtained a beauty, you have also obtained a physical skills prodigy, adding yet another great helper for our Tianji Mecha Clan," Lu Yong-guang congratulated at one side fawningly. This improved the white-clothed youth's mood greatly, the viciousness in his face fading considerably, morphing him back into a handsome, lively and sunny youth.

"You performed well this time. Later, go to the contribution department and collect a 2nd-tier resource. I'll give you my warrant in a bit." His mood greatly improved, the



white-clothed youth began to reward his underling who had performed well.

"Thank you, Brother Xi. Thank you, Brother Xi!" said Lu Yong-guang with pleasant surprise. He had initially thought he would be lucky to get a 3rd-tier resource, but Brother Xi was unexpectedly so generous this time.

A blue-clothed youth by Lu Yong-guang's side felt that this was not very appropriate, and was just about to speak up about it when a companion standing beside him tugged on his arm, signalling him to stay silent. The lord before them now was an obstinate and conceited person; he was not that just and righteous Lord Regiment Commander of theirs who was currently in Closed Door Meditation <sup>1</sup>.

After basking in a round of flattery by Lu Yong-guang, the white-clothed youth abruptly thought of something and asked nervously, "You've eliminated all signs, right? You're sure no one will be able to trace us back here?"

Lu Yong-guang replied proudly, "Don't worry, Brother Xi, I've handled everything. Even if the number one hacker, Lin Zhidong, gets involved, he won't be able to trace us anytime soon." That said, he laughed and said, "That New Cadet Regiment has also shot themselves in the foot. After offending Leiting, you think Lin Zhidong will help them? Definitely not, and as for the others... I believe no one will be able to crack my methods."

Hearing these words of Lu Yong-guang, the white-uniformed youth relaxed instantly and began to laugh. His doubts were gone — now, as long as he was given enough time, he would definitely be able to train that beauty well, so that the other would submit to him, body and soul, in the end.

The white-clothed youth was so confident because his spiritual mutation was a type of magical hypnotism. He could easily obtain the favour of others with it. If he wanted the other to love him wholeheartedly, as long as he had enough time, he would succeed. Just like with his previous lovers... this was exactly how he had reeled them in, and even until now, they still thought they had been willing <sup>2</sup>.

# Chapter 276

## Infiltration!

At the Tianji Mecha Clan headquarters, a shadowy figure dropped stealthily into the flower garden. At this particular time, this landing spot was precisely the blind spot of all the patrols and sentries...

With just one step, Ling Lan slipped into the corridor of the garden. By this time, Little Four had long cooperatively manipulated the surveillance feed of the corridor. In the monitoring room, the monitoring staff could only see images from several seconds ago...

Ling Lan's speed was ghost-like, leaving only a streak of shadowed light as she passed through the dim lighting of the corridor. Crossing the corridor, she arrived at the foot of the main building. She did not choose to enter the hall, instead dashing over to a blind spot by a wall.

Then, Ling Lan's hands could be seen to fly swiftly, aiming for the irregular spots on the wall, using them as makeshift handholds to pull her entire body up, crawling up the wall like a lizard in the blink of an eye to reach the fourth floor. At this moment, Luo Lang was stowed within one of the bedrooms on the fourth floor. She needed to rescue Luo Lang first before she considered anything else.

Moreover, Little Four had already given her a view of the entire headquarters beforehand. Therefore, she knew that the 4th floor, which was where she was climbing to now, had a room with an unlocked window. She would be able to open it and enter from there, and there was coincidentally no one inside at the moment. This was undoubtedly a good opportunity which could shorten the time Ling Lan needed to infiltrate the base.

Ling Lan came to that window, and lightly pushed it open. In the silent depths of the night, even the lightest creak would be striking. Ling Lan was extremely calm — without any hesitation in her movements, she opened the window just wide enough for her body and slipped into the room.

Right outside the room was the main corridor — Little Four was already displaying

the image of the corridor outside for Ling Lan, notifying her of the closest patrol. They were still a distance away, so Ling Lan did not hesitate to open the door, just as if she were still in her own villa. She walked out blatantly into the corridor, without any bit of the sort of wariness and care one should have when breaking and entering into someone else's home.

Ling Lan had faith in Little Four's judgment, and Ling Lan did not have the time to spare anyway, because Little Four had told Ling Lan that someone with nefarious intentions against Luo Lang was already heading towards the bedroom Luo Lang was in. She needed to hurry.

After travelling for a distance, Little Four suddenly warned her that there were two patrollers approaching from around the corner.

With a fleeting step, Ling Lan was at the corner. Several nimble steps up the wall later, she had climbed up to the crossbeam, and laid herself flat over it. If someone came up from behind Ling Lan, Ling Lan's figure would be clearly exposed to the eye, but from the opposing direction, Ling Lan's body was entirely obscured by the crossbeam. It would be impossible for the incoming patrollers to discover her presence behind the beam...

Perhaps the patrollers too did not expect that the impregnable headquarters <sup>1</sup> in their eyes would actually be infiltrated by an enemy, who had already gotten to the 4th floor. Mind you, security was strict on all floors below this one, so any intruder would typically not be able to get past the 2nd floor. Thus, they were somewhat slack, casually breezing past the crossbeam, never once considering to even lift their heads to look up <sup>2</sup>...

Ling Lan waited for the two men to pass below her, then quietly dropped back down to the ground. In order to eliminate any latent problems, her palms whipped down like knives, chopping onto the napes of the two men.

The two men toppled as the chops landed, and Ling Lan grabbed hold of a man with each hand. She then dragged them to the next equally empty room and tossed them into it.

These were all just small fry, so Ling Lan did not intend to be too harsh on them. In the internal energy she had used during the hand chops, she had only included a little bit of her innate talent's special power. If the other did not manage to clear out that bit of

special power, their progress would be greatly impeded — this was Ling Lan's punishment for their role as accomplices to the villain <sup>3</sup>.

After tossing them into the room, the remaining matters would be Little Four's responsibility. Little Four would lock the doors, and just as when they had been on the spaceship, before the morn of the next day, the men's communicators would be non-functional. Before Ling Lan had completely vented her rage, Little Four would ensure the men had no chance of contacting the outside world.

After settling the two men, Ling Lan swiftly hastened towards her destination. Along the way, with Little Four's advanced warnings, in order to avoid detection by the enemy, Ling Lan employed sneak attacks to bring down all enemies in her path before they could notice her.

Meanwhile, in the monitoring room, as Little Four had used a constant loop of false images to replace the video feed, those patrollers taken down by Ling Lan still appeared to be patrolling along their designated routes, again and again...



The white-uniformed youth finally felt the pain in his head leave him, his spiritual power recovering to his normal levels. He walked out excitedly from the infirmary in the base, prepared to properly enjoy the spoils of victory he had gained today. Thinking of that beauty finally capitulating to pleasure under his body, his heart felt hot; it was as if he had not felt this excited in a long time.

The white-uniformed youth was the dux of the starship command specialization, named Shi Mingyi <sup>4</sup>. He was one of the vice regiment commanders of the Tianji Mecha Clan. Technically, he was unqualified to take on a vice regiment commander role based on his abilities, but he just so happened to have a batch of faithfully loyal subordinates, one of whom was even the best mecha expert in the clan beneath the regiment commander. Due to that subordinate's emphatic support, Shi Mingyi had become a vice regiment commander of Tianji last year.

Since shouldering the role of vice regiment commander, Shi Mingyi had used the resources of the Tianji Mecha Clan quite often to seek out information on all the fair-faced youths in the various specializations. Of course, he was cunning about it — those with substantial family backgrounds, he would not dare to touch; he typically went after those from common stock, or those students without very significant

backgrounds. One after another over the past year, there had already been five or six youths who had fallen into his wicked hands. And now, these victims had all become team members in his fold, holding him in extraordinary love and admiration, loyal to a fault.

It was also precisely for this reason that Shi Mingyi's fondness for men had not yet been exposed. Adept at deception, he used his trump card to gather a great deal of good favour among the regular cadets, setting himself up as a sunny, righteous, and honest person. He was the consummate good student in the instructors' eyes, the dux who the students respected, the just vice regiment commander of the Tianji Mecha Clan...

Moreover, Shi Mingyi knew very well where the secret of his success laid — apart from himself, no one else knew that his spiritual mutation was Hypnotism. No one other than his closest confidantes knew he liked men. On the outside, he buried this proclivity of his deeply. Even though all types of gorgeous young men were gathered by his side, due to his own handsome appearance, he fit in well enough that no one had ever thought anything of it...

As a vice regiment commander, Shi Mingyi had a personal lounge within headquarters, at the end of the 4th floor. Even though it was just a small bedroom of about 20 square metres, it was furnished lavishly, with the entire floor covered in shag carpeting.

When one opened the door and entered the room, the first thing one would see would be a grand old-fashioned wooden armchair directly facing the doorway. However, this armchair was very strange, taller than regular chairs by 30 to 40 centimetres, almost at the height of a standard table. Who knows whether it was truly meant for sitting on or was just a decoration. Behind the armchair was a thick cloth curtain, hiding the scene deeper into the room from view.

Shi Mingyi cast a careful glance out the doorway, confirming that there was indeed no one there before softly shutting the door behind him. After that, he deadbolted the door and set a protective passcode, assuring that other than himself, no one else would be able to enter his room.

That done, he stepped past the armchair and parted the curtain. Inside, there was only a single circular waterbed, with chains as thick as one's thumb draping down from it on all sides, culminating in a strange aesthetic. Additionally, on the ceiling, a flat and sparkling mirror was embedded, clearly reflecting everything on the bed.

A youth in a green uniform was lying on the bed. On his delicate face, his eyebrows were knitted, his eyes closed tightly. It looked like he was deeply unconscious, but perhaps because there was some discomfort affecting his body, his complexion was pale, causing him to look even more pitiful and fragile. The sight of him almost caused Shi Mingyi to be consumed by the flames of lust — he wished desperately that he could morph into a ravenous wolf and gobble up this delectable youth instantly.

This lovely youth on the bed was precisely the one Ling Lan had spent so much time and effort to find, Luo Lang.

Besides the large bed, there was nothing else that could be seen within the room. The walls on all four sides were covered by thick, floor-length curtains.

Shi Mingyi gulped, slowly walking over to sit on the edge of the bed. He gently stroked that exquisite face of Luo Lang, so enchanted that he almost did not want to stop.

His fingers slid down slowly from Luo Lang's face to his neck, and then slowly unfastened the buttons on Luo Lang's uniform. He tugged open the top of the uniform forcefully, revealing the white shirt inside it, along with a faint trace of soft white skin.

Right then, Shi Mingyi could hold back no longer — he ripped apart the white shirt impatiently, and with a tearing sound, the rest of the buttons were sent flying, and Luo Lang's lovely body was exposed just like that before Shi Mingyi. The two pretty pink nubs on Luo Lang's chest almost made Shi Mingyi salivate...

"Exquisite, truly exquisite... who would have expected such an exquisite beauty to appear in the First Men's Military Academy? All those I have sampled before were just trash!" exclaimed Shi Mingyi, his fingers trailing down Luo Lang's chest. He revelled in the sensation he was receiving from his hand, feeling how smooth and warm the other's skin was, how supple...

Perhaps these touches made Luo Lang uncomfortable, for his brow creased even more noticeably. However, the effects of the anaesthetic were too strong; he still laid there unmoving.

Shi Mingyi had initially planned to properly savour the other, but seeing the other unresponsive like a dead fish, he felt somewhat dissatisfied. After some thought, he tugged over a chain hanging by the head of the bed, and looped it around Luo Lang's left hand, securing it. Next, he pulled yet another chain from the other side and

secured Luo Lang's right hand as well.

Then, he pressed a button at the head of the bed, and the curtain on his left-hand side was pulled aside to reveal a cabinet. Inside the cabinet were countless sex toys, and even some SM equipment <sup>5</sup>, and there was of course several high-tech safes installed within it as well.

Shi Mingyi pressed a finger onto the screen on one of the safes, and the initially dark screen lit up to display a numbered keypad. Shi Mingyi deftly keyed in a string of numbers, and with a dull click, the door of the safe sprang open. There was a considerable number of medical agents inside it, as well as several one-use syringes.

Shi Mingyi removed two tubes of agent from the safe, and then took out a one-use syringe set. He filled the syringe with one of the agents, walked over to Luo Lang, and injected its contents into Luo Lang's arm. This was closely followed by the next tube of agent, which he also injected into Luo Lang's arm.

After doing all this, Shi Mingyi discarded the one-use syringe set into the rubbish bin. He then shut the safe, returned to the bed, and pressed another button. The curtains drew close once more, restoring the room to its original state.

## Chapter 277

### How Dare You!

Very quickly, Luo Lang moaned and opened his eyes, and saw the white-uniformed youth beaming at him. Luo Lang's expression changed drastically, for he knew now that he had not managed to escape in the end and had been abducted by the other.

He struggled, then heard the clinking noises coming from above his head. Looking up, Luo Lang saw his hands bound in metal chains, and as the anaesthetic had not completely worn off yet, he still felt weak and powerless.

"Who are you? Which organisation are you from? Why did you capture me?" Luo Lang quickly calmed himself down and spoke up to ask. His voice was rather hoarse and weak — in Shi Mingyi's ears, it naturally had a particular flavour of enticement.

"Shi Mingyi, 4th year dux of the starship command specialization and vice regiment commander of the Tianji Mecha Clan. And as for why I captured you?" Shi Mingyi smiled and reached out to stroke a hand over Luo Lang's face, expression besotted as he said, "That's because I like you..."

Luo Lang tried to evade Shi Mingyi's fingers in revulsion, but was unsuccessful. And then Shi Mingyi's words registered, causing him to freeze for a moment, but he quickly understood and yelled in rage, "Let go of me, you pervert!"

"A pervert, is it? If I must become a pervert to like you, I will willingly succumb to this depravity!" Shi Mingyi's face shifted to reveal a bitter smile. This expression startled Luo Lang, but logic quickly reasserted itself as he scolded, "Of course you're a pervert, or else how could you do something like abduction?"

Shi Mingyi's body jerked back as he pressed a hand to his forehead. He closed his eyes to rest his mind for a beat before opening them again. Right then, his initial seemingly earnest smile was nowhere to be seen... there was only darkness and a trace of ruthlessness left on his face. "Still not working? Who could have expected that your spiritual power is this strong, actually repelling me once more, reflecting damage back at me. Looks like, I need to first let you taste the all-consuming pleasure of the body before you'll be willing to submit to me."



That said, he began to take off his clothes. Luo Lang's irises contracted, and his pearl-white teeth bit down harshly on his own lips. He was trying to use pain to chase away the effects of the anaesthetic, desperately circulating the Qi-Jin in his body, hoping that he would be able to recover enough Qi-Jin for a final suicide attack.

Yes. Luo Lang was prepared to die with his enemy in his attempt; he would not suffer this humiliation...

Within the yawning emptiness in his body, Luo Lang suddenly sensed the presence of internal energy again. Pleasant surprise flashed through Luo Lang's eyes, but very quickly, his expression changed once more, the initial paleness of his face being replaced by a rosy flush.

"Haha, you're feeling it now, right? This is some ultra-potent aphrodisiac. It will make you beg me to give it to you again and again, turning you into a complete slut..." Shi Mingyi began laughing gleefully at the sight.

He was just about to rip off the clothes on the lower half of Luo Lang's body when a frigid aura enveloped the entire room...

"How dare you!" A glacial voice rang out by Shi Mingyi's ear, instantly dousing Shi Mingyi's blazing fires of lust with a deluge of ice-cold water, cooling him down rapidly.

Meanwhile, on the bed... Luo Lang, who had been planning to kill himself along with his captor, had relieved joy shining from his eyes. His line of sight had coincidentally shifted to look up at the mirror on the ceiling, and from its reflection, he could see a stony and stately figure standing at the curtain by the door — it was Ling Lan!

"Boss..." Luo Lang cried out emotionally. His eyes turned red uncontrollably, as his heart full of rage, sorrow and despair instantly melted into a pool of tender emotions. So this was Boss, his boss that deserved his loyalty and trust... he had come at this most critical moment to save him.

Shi Mingyi whipped his head around in shock, and seeing that familiar figure before his eyes, his expression shifted as he called out, "Ling Lan! It's you..." He reflexively looked towards the area behind Ling Lan. He had clearly set a passcode — didn't Lu Yong-guang say before that no one would be able to crack the lock, and would only be able to break down the door by force to enter? How then had the other snuck in without a sound? Without him sensing anything at all?

"You've made me angry... you, have to pay the price for your transgressions!" Ling Lan's face was a sheet of ice, for she had seen Luo Lang's current state. The killing intent in her heart waxed thicker. The blood-soaked killing intent concealed deep within her body all this while abruptly exploded out into the room, instantly dominating the entire space.

Qi Long, Luo Lang and the other little companions who had grown up alongside Ling Lan held special places in Ling Lan's heart. Ling Lan took care of them like her own younger brothers — in fact, in Ling Lan's heart, they were even like sons to her — the emotions she invested in them were beyond the norm.

Ling Lan's killing intent was extremely dense now, but she controlled it skilfully, not allowing any bit to leak out of the room. As the main target of the killing intent, Shi Mingyi instantly felt himself plunged into a crimson world. Countless knives of light and swords of shadow hurtled towards him — he felt himself being pierced by these countless phantom blades, but also felt his limbs being sliced off bit by bit, his gut dissected, and his heart torn out, but he could not die. He watched helplessly as his body, his innards, were finally reduced to a puddle of bloody water, which then vanished without leaving a trace.

This was not only physical agony — it was also a spiritual torment. There was a moment where he even wanted to end his life by biting his tongue off, unwilling to bear this endless suffering any longer <sup>1</sup>...

In reality, he had really bitten his tongue. However, perhaps because he did not have enough strength, or perhaps he did not really want to die in his subconscious mind, for although he had bitten his tongue, he had only wounded it and not severed it completely. Still, this allowed him to stumble onto an escape by chance — the intense pain shook him out of the illusion of hellish torment, to return to reality.

However, even so, the power which had crashed onto him from the start had still caused internal injury to Shi Mingyi. The moment he regained awareness, a lance of blood spurted from his mouth, and his entire body wavered on his feet.

At this time, Shi Mingyi could already tell that he was no match at all for Ling Lan. He had some understanding with regards to force of presence. He knew that it was one of the abilities one gained in the late stages of Qi-Jin. He had studied it and formed it himself — it would push a crushing pressure onto the intended target, effectively subduing them. He had never before encountered such a formidable embodiment of

presence however. Its power was not only presented on a physical plane, but also on a spiritual one. If he had not stumbled onto a way out of its effect by chance, he might have been trapped in its endless torments until he died.

Shi Mingyi knew that he had misstepped this time. Who knew that the seemingly easily bulliable Luo Lang actually had such a powerful boss behind him? Shi Mingyi did not want to die, so he decided to use his last resort...

"Boss Ling, I think this is a misunderstanding." Shi Mingyi tolerated the pain in his mouth, forcing a stiff smile onto his lips.

Ling Lan quirked a brow at these words. "Oh?" She had sensed a strange tendril of spiritual power trying to invade her spiritual domain.

This should be a type of spiritual attack, but it was not one Ling Lan was familiar with. It did not cause any discomfort, and seemed exceedingly harmless. Of course, Ling Lan would not permit any strange spiritual power to just invade into her spiritual domain. With a swift spiritual shake, she crushed this cord of spiritual power.

Sure enough, the moment Ling Lan destroyed this cord of spiritual power, Shi Mingyi's body jerked, his already pale face becoming even paler, losing all trace of blood. She even saw the other's eyebrows lock tightly together, the muscles on his face spasming. It looked like the rebound force had been extremely powerful — the other had not been able to bear it without reacting.

"Little Four, what spiritual power is this?" Ling Lan was curious, so she asked Little Four within the mindscape.

Little Four immediately answered, "This is a type of mid-level awakened innate talent, Mesmerise!"

Sensing Ling Lan's confusion, he explained, "It's actually what you call 'hypnotism' in your world. With this ability, a person can beguile another to change how they view them..." Little Four silently wiped off the cold sweat from his forehead — luckily, he still had nine instructors to be his solid backup, otherwise he would not have been able to elaborate anything on this kind of mysterious awakened innate talent...

Ling Lan's initially tepid face became frigid once more — this type of ability in the hands of such a scumbag... how many innocent people had suffered at his hands? In an instant, Ling Lan decided to rid the other of this innate talent.

Shi Mingyi found that his Hypnotism had backfired on him, and felt a surge of despair. He knew now that the other was most likely someone with a mental spiritual mutation, able to defend against this ability of his, just like Luo Lang. He was not content to just give up and be captured, so when he saw Ling Lan appear to be thinking about something, he leapt forwards with a spring of his right foot, pouncing towards Luo Lang on the bed, planning to grab Luo Lang to use as a hostage...

As long as Luo Lang was in his hands and the opponent became afraid to act, it would give him the chance to sound the alarm in Tianji's headquarters and he would be able to live! Yes, he did not want to die... because he had seen the boundless killing intent within the opponent's eyes!

"You're asking for it!"

Seeing Shi Mingyi try to grab Luo Lang in a final desperate bid for survival, Ling Lan growled furiously.

Following this sound, Shi Mingyi's darting body crashed onto the ground. A powerful spiritual charge had been sent straight at his brain — he only felt his brain being struck harshly, and then there was a soft 'splat' as if his brain had split open, and he fell unconscious.

Ling Lan's figure shifted and she was instantly by Luo Lang's side. She asked, "Luo Lang, how do you feel?"

"I'm okay, Boss! I just feel weak." Despite the red flush suffusing Luo Lang's face — the aphrodisiac in his body already beginning to show effect — because it was still in the early stages, he could still bear it. He was extremely ashamed about how he had been captured so easily, finally even needing to trouble Boss Lan to come save him.

"Anaesthetic?" Ling Lan scanned Luo Lang's body, and found that the anaesthetic had already mostly run its course. As long as they waited patiently, Luo Lang would return to normal, but there was still another extremely strange agent within Luo Lang's body.

"What is this?" Ling Lan was rather puzzled.

"Boss, Luo Lang has been dosed with an aphrodisiac." Little Four had described Luo Lang's condition to the instructors of the learning space. When he had told Instructor Number Nine, she had kicked him right out of her space, while Instructor Number Five had only reacted with a sleazy and lecherous smile. Fortunately, Instructor Number

Four had taken pity on him and secretly told him the answer... but, what was this thing called an aphrodisiac? Little Four decided to rifle through his databases to find out.

"What?! Aphrodisiac?!" The veins on Ling Lan's head popped out in anger. She swept a freezing gaze at the unconscious Shi Mingyi lying on the ground, and unhesitatingly lifted a foot to stomp heavily on the other's unprotected back. She ground her heel mercilessly into his back for a moment, and the cracking sounds of bones breaking could be heard. Shi Mingyi's backbone had been pulverized by Ling Lan <sup>2</sup>.

"Is there an antidote? Little Four, search the scene." Ling Lan ordered as she broke the chains holding down the wounded Luo Lang.

# Chapter 278

## Little Four Takes Action!

Little Four saw many buttons at the head of the bed and so infiltrated into the system. Very soon, he had found that safe of Shi Mingyi's which contained so many agents. Opening it, he discovered that aside from the antidote for the anaesthetic, the other agents were all myriad types of arousal-enhancing agents, which were collectively known as aphrodisiacs.

Little Four had already found the description of aphrodisiacs in his database. With a troubled expression, he said in the mindscape, *"Boss, it seems like there are no antidotes for aphrodisiacs. The only antidote is to find him a woman... but this whole academy is all boys, you are the only girl."*

Seeing Ling Lan sweep a fierce glare in his direction, Little Four quickly ducked his head and muttered at his fingers, *"Of course, if that's really out of the question, it's also fine to find a man for him..."* According to the database, there were cases where men helped men to clear out the aphrodisiac, although, Little Four really did not understand why the antidote had to involve males and females... the innocent Little Four still did not really understand what was meant by the carnal pleasures of love.

*"You can just stop giving those rotten ideas of yours,"* huffed Ling Lan in exasperation.

Right then, Luo Lang struggled to sit up, and tolerating the discomfort of his body, he said to Ling Lan, "Boss, I'm fine." Luo Lang did not want to hold his boss back at this dangerous moment.

Ling Lan threw a glance at Luo Lang's trembling legs — in this state, could he really follow her to charge out of Tianji headquarters? Ling Lan did not think Luo Lang could really do it.

Perhaps sensing Ling Lan's distrust, Luo Lang bit gently at his lower lip, face determined as he said, "Boss, believe me, I can do it!" He, Luo Lang, would not lose to anaesthetic, and he also would not lose to this ridiculous aphrodisiac...

Luo Lang's determination made Ling Lan sigh internally. Although Luo Lang looked

like the most delicate one among all her companions, the stubbornness and aggression in his bones were no less than Qi Long's — it could be said that the other members of the team were a bracket weaker than him in this respect. Ling Lan believed that if she really permitted Luo Lang to follow behind her, even if he pushed himself till he was littered with injuries, Luo Lang would still stubbornly keep pace behind her as long as he remained conscious. What a little fellow who tugged at one's heartstrings...

Ling Lan could only nod and say, "Understood!"

Ling Lan's reply made a smile bloom on Luo Lang's face — Boss was still willing to believe in him...

Right at that moment, Ling Lan darted forwards, and before Luo Lang could react, she had already pinched the back of Luo Lang's neck forcefully. With a trace of incomprehension in his eyes, Luo Lang fell unconscious.<sup>1</sup>

*"Ah~ah~ah~ah~ah~! Boss, you actually gave away your first virgin hug to this brat Luo Lang!"* Little Four went utterly berserk at this sight. I mean, this was Boss Lan's first hug! He had originally set it so that he, Little Four, would be the one to receive it... why had this brat taken it away now? At this moment, filled with envy-jealousy-hate, Little Four was unbelievably resentful at how backward the technology of this world was, actually lacking any physical constructs which an intelligent bio-entity could inhabit and use. Otherwise, he would long have taken Boss's first hug for himself.

*"Shut your mouth. My first hug has long ago been given to Mum..."* Little Four's words rendered Ling Lan somewhat speechless. Wasn't her mum the first to hug her right after she was born? It should be... right? Ling Lan was a little uncertain.

*"It doesn't count for the same gender. It must be for the opposite sex. The opposite sex, you hear me? And also, it must be you, Boss, who initiates the hug."* Little Four objected stubbornly, insisting that Mummy Lan's hugs did not count.

*"Then, it still would not be Luo Lang. My first hug has already been taken by Dad,"* Ling Lan calmly revealed the truth to Little Four. The thing he was obsessing over had long been given out long ago.

Little Four was stunned. *"How come I didn't know about this?"*

*"At that time, you were already completely bowled over by Dad... you could see nothing*

*else but him,"* said Ling Lan disdainfully. Every time Little Four saw Ling Xiao, he would become a crazy fan, with not one whit of the level-headedness so-called intelligent bio-entities should have. Ling Lan once again confirmed that this Little Four was definitely a factory reject.

Ling Lan even suspected that Little Four had only been able to appear in the primitive Earth of her previous life because the person who had created Little Four had not been able to accept this flawed product. Based on the 'out of sight, out of mind' mantra, had that person thrown Little Four into a primitive dimension for him to live and die as fate decreed?

Ling Lan felt that this hypothesis was very reasonable — when Little Four sensed Ling Lan's thoughts, he was sent spiralling into a tantrum. He vehemently objected to this preposterous theory, insisting that he, Little Four, was a special intelligence entity that was truly one of a kind among the celestial and mortal realm. He hoped that Ling Lan would properly cherish him, this omnipotent follower...

Of course, Ling Lan had already gotten used to this behaviour of Little Four's — when she was younger, she would still end up resorting to 'domestic violence' out of sheer aggravation, but now, she had become extremely indifferent to it, calm and unruffled in the face of it. Ling Lan felt that Little Four deserved a lot of credit for her slackface-fu <sup>2</sup> being so strong; without his antics day after day, year after year, helping her to train up her heart and tolerance, she would not have been able to maintain it so well.

Just like this, under Little Four's raging frenzy, Ling Lan hefted Luo Lang over her shoulder. As she left, she did not forget to stomp mightily several times over Shi Mingyi's body. Ling Lan was not purely venting her rage — these few stomps carried her unique Qi-Jin. It could be said that without some peerless expert's help in driving out this energy from the other's body, even if Shi Mingyi's shattered bones were treated and healed, he would not be able to stand up again.

When Ling Lan left Shi Mingyi's room, Little Four subsided from his initial frenzied state into extreme calmness. Eyes bright, he asked, *"Boss, can I act now?"*

They had planned things this way from the start — after they had rescued Luo Lang, all the surveillance equipment within Tianji's headquarters, along with the exclusive mainframe belonging to Tianji headquarters, would be open game for Little Four. He could play with them however he liked — though of course, the condition being that whatever he did would not be traced back to the New Cadet Regiment...



*"Yup, and don't forget to find out who were those involved in Luo Lang's kidnapping."* Ling Lan's lips quirked up slightly, her eyes endlessly cold, "Luo Lang's abduction never happened. You know what to do."

*"Kill them all?"* Little Four was thrilled by these words — Ling Lan had always forbidden him from acting overtly in the virtual world; he had actually felt very constrained. Mind you, his greatest talents laid in the virtual world, where he could determine whether everyone lived or died...

*"No, there's no need for that. Those scum are not worthy for my Little Four to commit this crime. You only need to crush their spiritual selves and that'll do..."* Ling Lan said to Little Four within the mindspace as she stroked his head tenderly, though the words she spouted were exceedingly vicious. Little Four might not understand yet, but at times, living was a fate worse than death!

*"Got it, Boss, leave it to me..."* Little Four cast down these words and then went off to complete his task and 'kill' some people.

Ling Lan stared at the spot in the mindspace where Little Four had disappeared. Her emotions were a complicated jumble... she did not know whether this decision of hers was too cruel. After all, destroying another's spiritual self was equal to turning the other into an idiot. Shi Mingyi's brain-space had been crushed by her, so it was confirmed that he would be a handicapped idiot when he woke up again. She did not regret this, even thinking that leaving him with his life was already a mercy. However, those other people she had set Little Four after were only accomplices. Other than participating in Luo Lang's abduction, they had not done too many bad things...

At this time, Ling Lan could feel Luo Lang's body on her shoulder becoming hotter and hotter, and that trace of compassion and hesitance in her heart vanished. Indeed, those people might have only been accomplices, but if not for them, would Shi Mingyi alone have been able to capture Luo Lang? If Luo Lang was destroyed by this...

At this thought, Ling Lan could not stop herself from slamming a fist into a wall. Her hidden energy flowed from her hand into the wall, spreading out into the surrounding area, creating countless cracks inside the wall. As Ling Lan's strength was released in an extremely skilful manner, there was not a trace of the internal damage on the surface of the wall.

The coldness in Ling Lan's eyes grew thicker; she decided she would be true to her

heart. She could not bear the outcome of losing Luo Lang, and so could not find it within herself to forgive those people. Therefore, they needed to pay the price for this current situation.

Those who harmed her brothers, she would make them pay the price in blood. If not, how could she face those comrades of hers who trusted her and loved her? For this reason, even if her hands became stained with blood and sin, she was willing to sully them.



Right then, in the initially quiet monitoring room of Tianji headquarters, a shocked cry rang out suddenly, "What happened? Why is my screen here black?"

The staff on-duty within headquarters discovered the strange state of his monitoring channel, and instantly leapt up in shock.

"Me too over here. The screen's black too!" Another monitor shouted as well.

"I can't see anything here now either!" The monitoring room was instantly in a state of panic.

"Don't panic, check the mainframe system immediately," ordered the on-duty leader calmly.

Following this order, everyone in the room began to move. They all attempted their own methods to try and connect with the mainframe system, but found to their dismay that nothing worked. They just could not contact the mainframe system — it was as if the mainframe had been sealed off.

"Leader, I have no response here!" One team member shouted out, his face drenched with sweat.

"Me too, over here, there's no way in!" Another team member lowered his hands in frustration. No matter how many times he tried to connect to the mainframe, the signals he sent were like rocks sinking into the ocean.

"Not good, it's a hacker attack. Cut all connections with the mainframe. Activate the secondary A.I. system." The leader seemed to come to some conclusion, his face paling

drastically. He hurriedly instructed his team members to cut off all headquarters' terminal connections with the mainframe which had been invaded. After that, he would be able to activate the secondary A.I. to take over all the surveillance systems and safety measures within headquarters.

"Yes, Leader!" The leader's orders rallied the team members' spirits. It was true that they had not run out of options yet — they still had the backup secondary A.I. system. As long as they could hold out for the duration of time needed for it to activate, they would be able to guarantee that Tianji headquarters remained properly safeguarded.

However, after they had manually cut off the mainframe's electrical supply and activated the secondary A.I., they found that the situation remained unchanged. All of the equipment were still in a frozen state, unable to be used...

"Leader, what now?" One of the team members looked to be younger than the rest, and he actually began to sob uncontrollably. If any great incident occurred while their systems were incapacitated, the consequences of failure would be too much for all of them to bear.

"Relying on us alone will not be enough. Quickly, go gather all the hacker members in the clan and get them to come here to the monitoring room..." At this time, the team leader could no longer remain calm. Sweat poured from his forehead, dripping off it like rain.

# Chapter 279

## Domain Master?

"Yes, Leader!" The team members quickly turned on their respective communicators, thinking to contact the hackers in their Tianji Mecha Clan. However, they soon found that their communicators were all dead.

"The communicators cannot make external contact..." This realisation made the faces of all the team members change drastically. They, who had initially already calmed down after receiving their leader's orders, began to panic and lose control of themselves again, completely at a loss on what they should do.

This was not something any ordinary hacker could do — mind you, taking control of a student's personal communicator was not that simple. The hacker would need to break through the defences of the S-tier mainframe of the military academy and obtain all its administrative rights; only then would they be able to control the communicators of the cadets. Could it be that the one attacking Tianji headquarters was a god-class hacker?

"How could this be?" The team leader jumped up in fright at his team members' words. He began examining his communicator in disbelief, and found that it was truly as his team members had said — his communicator was completely unresponsive.

"No. This type of ability, even if it were the number one hacker of our school, Leiting's Lin Zhidong, he would not be able to do this... could it be that this attack is from the outside?" The team leader's face went dark at this thought. No matter how powerful an attack was from inside the school, it was still just inside the school — there would be no real harm to the military academy's mainframe. However, if the attack was an external one, their school would be in danger!

He said anxiously, "You all continue trying to login to the mainframe, I'll go find the instructors..." Such a formidable hacker attack — only the instructors would have the power to save them.

That said, the team leader rushed out of the monitoring room, prepared to go find the instructors of the hacker specialization and report what was happening here. If his

guess was right, this attack was very likely a sinister plot of an outside faction targeted at the military academy — their Tianji was just unluckily the spot they chose to infiltrate from.

Meanwhile, at this time, with Luo Lang over her shoulder, Ling Lan was swiftly making her way across the 4th floor corridors. Every 20 to 30 metres, Ling Lan would smack a palm at the wall. This action seemed extremely casual, and did not appear from the outside to cause any damage to the wall.

However, Ling Lan herself knew that the spots where she had chosen to hit were all the main structural points of support of this building. When she had come, she and Little Four had already discussed beforehand that Little Four would be in charge of destroying all the surveillance facilities here, while she would demolish the entire building. She wanted the Tianji Mecha Clan to fall from their perch in the clouds into a pit of dust and ashes. Once they were no longer the lofty 2nd faction of the school, they would no longer have the wherewithal to commit any more dirty criminal acts.

Besides, Little Four had already given Ling Lan the blueprints of this building before she had even entered it. On the map, he had even thoughtfully provided several spots which were most appropriate for Ling Lan to attack.

After finishing with the 4th floor, Ling Lan immediately chose to go downstairs. After ambushing several patrolmen in the stairwell who were slacking off with a cigarette break, she successfully came to the second floor, and then continued with her demolition work.

Right then, Little Four suddenly began to shout excitedly, *"Boss, I've found Lu Yong-guang!"*

After Little Four had destroyed the mainframe of the Tianji headquarters and all the surveillance equipment, he had begun searching for those people who had helped Shi Mingyi abduct Luo Lang, and very quickly, he had found that the biggest culprit was Lu Yong-guang. If he had not used the treatment centre to send a fake message to Luo Lang, Luo Lang would not have gone there, and what happened next would never have happened.

*"Destroy him!"* Ling Lan replied clinically. Having decided on her personal code of honour, Ling Lan's way of acting became even more cold and resolute.

"Roger that, Boss!" answered Little Four excitedly. He could finally show off his amazing skills to his boss.

The initially cute steamed bun-face of Little Four stretched as he opened his mouth wide. Two sharp fangs began to grow out from within it, and the area around his marble-round eyes began to turn bruised and mottled as his face became paler and paler, in stark contrast to his lips which were as vibrantly crimson as fresh blood.

'Thwack!' A strong finger-flick sent Little Four's gruesome head bending back. Face dark, Ling Lan said, *"What the hell are you doing? Who are you trying to scare with this demonic appearance?"* Little Four appearing with such a demonic aura without any warning... no matter how composed Ling Lan was, she could not help a shudder from coursing through her heart. D\*mnit, since she was a kid, she had never liked watching horror films.

Little Four was flicked back to his original form by Ling Lan — seeing Ling Lan's angry expression, Little Four quickly covered his head with his arms and scurried away, er, no, went off to carry out his task of 'killing people'...



Right then, Li Lanfeng, who was in the military academy's virtual world revising his training courses, suddenly felt an extremely familiar yet horrifying energy explode within the virtual world. His spectre energy was blaring violent warnings at him, and had automatically activated itself to form a powerful defensive shield.

*"This is spectre energy. How is this possible?"* Li Lanfeng stared in the direction of where the explosion originated from, his face filled with disbelief. He knew very well that this energy had come from within the military academy, otherwise he would not have sensed it so acutely. This energy was something only spectres could sense — could it be that there was another spectre hidden within the military academy?

An extremely cold and unfeeling face emerged in Li Lanfeng's mind... could it be him? Only he had given Li Lanfeng the vibe that he could be kin, but Li Lanfeng just could not be sure. This explosion of energy — did it prove Ling Lan was also a spectre like him?

Could that person be his companion? At this thought, Li Lanfeng's heart pounded, so hard that it almost seemed as if it would leap out of his throat. His heart, which had

been so lonely all this time, could not help but yearn for this, just like when he had encountered that rabbit seven years ago.



Lu Yong-guang, who was in the virtual world searching for information, was currently ecstatic. He had obtained the 2nd-tier warrant of vice regiment commander Shi <sup>1</sup> as he had wanted. To get this, he had done quite a number of questionable things, but the rewards were bountiful. Lu Yong-guang felt that it was very worth it — heaven destroys those who do not look out for themselves, after all.

This 2nd-tier warrant entitled him to withdraw a 2nd-tier resource from the Tianji Contribution Department. The types of 2nd-tier resource were abundant — in order to avoid wastage, he had decided to first do some research in the virtual world, so that he would be able to make the best choice and select a resource most appropriate for himself.

Just as he was reading all the materials he had gathered with relish, he suddenly felt an unprecedented sense of danger rise within his heart. Before he could react, he felt a tremendous force steamrolling over his body...

Lu Yong-guang felt his consciousness fading, his vision becoming blurry and unfocused, and then everything turned completely black as he finally became fully unconscious.

If there had been anyone by Lu Yong-guang's side, they would have found that Lu Yong-guang's body in the virtual world was slowly disappearing. This was distinctly different from the typical log-off process, where a person would turn into a flash of white light and disappear swiftly from the virtual world. Instead, this was a slow process — his body was disintegrating slowly, becoming countless small particles which drifted into the air, finally becoming a slight breeze within the virtual world to disappear without a trace.

Meanwhile, Lu Yong-guang's real body, lying in a virtual world login device, never ever opened his eyes again. He had become a vegetable. Little Four hated how the other had abetted evil for his own greed, and thus had not shown any mercy. He had crushed the other's awareness completely, not even giving him the chance to live as a simpleton.

As for the other people involved, Little Four still obeyed Ling Lan's directive. He only destroyed part of their brain region, leaving that last thread of awareness. In other words, they would still wake up, but they could only live the rest of their lives as dullards.

When Ling Lan was about to finish her sabotage of the 2nd floor, Little Four returned to Ling Lan's mindspace after completing his tasks.

*"Boss, all done!"* said Little Four smugly, his hand raised in a victory sign. However, he was still rather regretful that his boss had not been there to witness his great prowess in the virtual world. Little Four secretly decided that if there was a chance in future, he would definitely make sure Boss got to see how he killed and tormented those scumbags in the virtual world with her own eyes. He would let Boss truly understand the meaning behind his status of god of the virtual world.

*"Alright, now it's my turn."* In the blink of an eye, Ling Lan returned to the central area of the 2nd floor. She raised one hand and shouted, "Domain, activate!" <sup>2</sup>

A half step to Domain was enough to allow her to activate her Domain for a few seconds. Although it might be ineffective in neutralizing opponents due to how briefly it could be used, it was more than enough to demolish this building which had already been structurally weakened by her...

Right then, the entire space about 10 metres around Ling Lan had become her Domain, and then Ling Lan could be heard to roar, "Explode!"

Violent explosions answered her cry, beginning from the Domain area furthest from Ling Lan. Since the person controlling the Domain was Ling Lan, in order to guarantee Luo Lang's safety, Ling Lan had chosen the safest sequence of explosion.

Following the activation of the first explosion, Ling Lan's figure was like a streak of light, passing by the corridors of the 2nd floor in a flash.

At the end of the corridor was a window — right before she would crash into it, Ling Lan's readied palm pushed out forcefully, sending a surge of invisible energy at it, shattering the glass panes of the window into smithereens. And at the moment Ling Lan broke the glass, she leapt down from the second floor with Luo Lang. With a soft touch of her feet on a branch outside, she flew off in a sprint, leaving the Tianji headquarters without a sound, vanishing without a trace in an instant.



Meanwhile, violent explosions began to rock Tianji headquarters. Several minutes later, the entire Tianji building could no longer withstand the destructive power of the explosions, collapsing in on itself, and the people on duty inside could be seen rushing out amidst horrified wails and howls.

Of course, this did not account for those who did not manage to escape in time. Those people were trapped within the ruins, but with the abilities of any student of the First Academy, even if they were trapped under rubble, they would not die.

Ling Lan's use of the immense power of half step into Domain to blow up the entire building startled several old beasts <sup>3</sup> who had been laying dormant within the school all this time. They charged over to the scene as soon as they could, hiding in the shadows, trying to sense the remaining energy signature to try and see which tough customer had done this...

"Actually a Domain stage? This energy signature is very unfamiliar. I have never seen it before... Hells, how did a foreign Domain stage master make their way randomly into the military academy?"

When they confirmed the energy signature was unfamiliar, they could not help but look at one another, all of them equally shocked. They, who had always taken pride in the fact that the military academy's defences were no weaker than that of the Federation's military headquarters, felt deeply burned by this scene before their eyes.

"Looks like, the other has already left." After closely investigating the scene, they did not sense any presence of the Domain master remaining in the area.

# Chapter 280

## The Aftermath!

These few old beasts were filled with worry, unsure whether this Domain master was still within the school planning his next act of destruction. What bothered them even more was — for what reason had the other come to the military academy to do such a thing? Also, were the defensive capabilities of the military academy really as foolproof as they had imagined? If it were, then how in the world had this Domain master gotten in?

They just could not figure it out, and so one of them said, "Let us return and discuss this with the principal!"

This suggestion was agreed upon by all those present. They might not be overly clear on what was going on in the academy, but the principal of the school should know better. Perhaps he would be able to give them an answer. They left as quietly as they had come — no one else at the scene even knew that some supreme strong masters had been there to investigate the scene.



The emergency assistance system of the military academy was extremely efficient. It had not even been 5 minutes since the building had collapsed when the first batch of relief workers had rushed to the scene, beginning to rescue the students trapped within the rubble...

Right then, Ling Lan, who was already far from the scene, was sitting with Luo Lang in a hover car, swiftly flying towards the destination that Little Four had set. At the very moment those old beasts had appeared, that was when Ling Lan had gotten into the hover car and left. If she had been later by just one second, she might have been caught by those old beasts. No matter how composed she was normally, Ling Lan could not help but feel cold sweat running down her back at this time.

It was unexpected that this seemingly laid-back academy actually had so many powerful masters holding the fort <sup>1</sup>. Luckily, she had escaped swiftly enough with Little

Four's spot-on assistance — any bit of error, and she would have become a turtle in a jar <sup>2</sup>.

Of course, Ling Lan had already taken precautions against this right from the start. She was well aware that there would definitely be some super strong masters holding the fort inside the military academy — even the Central Scout Academy already had a few Domain masters in-house, not to mention the First Men's Military Academy <sup>3</sup>. Thus, Ling Lan had made arrangements beforehand, choosing to begin running the moment the first explosion was set off. Reality proved that her decision was correct.

Escaping by the skin of their teeth, Little Four breathed out a great gust of relief. With some remnant fear, he patted his little chest and said, "Gosh, Boss, that was too close! I can't believe we really managed to escape right under the noses of those Domain masters."

"It's all thanks to you, Little Four, for finding the best escape path, as well as getting a hover car here in time." Ling Lan could not help but pat the hover car they were riding, filled with admiration at Little Four's accurate calculation ability.

Even if she had run at full strength, without Little Four's flawless coordination in getting this hover car here to cover them, she would not have been able to escape from the other side's powerful sensory range. She would certainly have left some energy vibrations of her own on the roads she travelled, and they would have been the evidence which would expose her.

Praised by Ling Lan, Little Four joyfully clapped his hands to his face and wriggled his bum, taking a good long while to calm down again. Then, he thought of those patrolmen who had been knocked unconscious by his boss, and could not help but ask worriedly, "Boss, will there be any problems with those people you knocked unconscious?" It was not that Little Four cared whether they lived or died — as an intelligent bio-entity, he had no feelings <sup>4</sup> — Little Four was just worried that his boss would be burdened by guilt if anything really happened to them.

"They're fine. The supports of those areas where I stashed them, I did not sabotage. Even though the building collapsed, those few rooms will be alright," replied Ling Lan evenly. Although she had destroyed the entire Tianji building in revenge, she would not let these uninvolved people die in the process. She was someone who clearly discriminated between justice and mercy.

"Boss, you're really awesome! Actually planning so thoroughly." Little Four resolutely began sucking up, fully slipping into the role of a brown-nosing lackey, fanning Ling Lan's mood even higher. It should be mentioned that, the moment Ling Lan succeeded in destroying Tianji's headquarters, her mood had already become all kinds of amazing.

In the meantime, those supreme masters of the school had already had a round of discussion with the principal, but still had not received a satisfactory answer. Very soon, another piece of news arrived — according to the info they had gleaned from those members of the monitoring team of the Tianji Mecha Clan, before the building collapsed, it was suspected that their Tianji headquarters had been hacked by an imperial level hacker.

As more and more people were rescued out, a number of clan members were found trapped in the wreckage who had had parts of their brains ravaged, leaving them as mentally-handicapped people. Among them, one member who was from the hacker specialization was gravely injured; he was reduced to a vegetable instantly. The Military Medical Research Centre determined that there was no possibility of him ever waking up again.

The discovery of these people made the masters speculate — in this incident, had there been a fearsome spectre involved as well? Three people with exceptional skills in their respective realms appearing at the same time at the military academy... this possibility caused chills to run through those masters.

Where in the world had these people come from? Which faction were they affiliated with? With their capabilities, they could have taken down the mainframe of the military academy if they wanted — why had they chosen to strike out at a group of a small faction within the school?

For a time, all sorts of conspiracy theories ran rampant among the upper ranks of the military academy. There were even some who cast suspicion on the other military academies — they speculated that the other schools were trying to affect their First Academy's results in the great assessment this time, and so had purposefully created this disruption. Those schools must have been trying to make the students panic and lose all mind to prepare for the exams, thus affecting the final test results and causing the First Academy to lose their secure spot at the top...

These speculations received quite a significant degree of agreement from those of the

upper ranks, leading them to spread their investigation out far and wide, indirectly helping Ling Lan out.

Of course, there were still other possibilities being considered by the upper ranks of the administration, but no one even thought to consider the involvement of any cadets.

In truth, there was indeed no one who would even suggest the possibility, for anyone who voiced this possibility would most probably be laughed out of the room. Oh please, what do you take a Domain master for? And what of an imperial level hacker? How could a mere academy cadet become such a horrific existence? If they really were at that level, would they still need to come study at the military academy? They would have long been snatched away by the various army divisions...

As for the spectre? That was even more unimaginable. Mind you, anyone who possessed this kind of horrifying ability would have already been taken in as the secret weapon of the federal military since birth — how could they be hiding within the ranks of cadets in the academy?

It had to be said that the upper ranks of the military academy were taking things a little for granted; sometimes, the truth just really happened to be those things that seemed completely preposterous and impossible...

In order to settle the collapse of the building this time and allow the students to prepare for the upcoming exams without any worries, the administration suppressed the entire incident. They also gave a plausible explanation to those members of the Tianji Mecha Clan who had reported the attack by the imperial level hacker. They said that their investigations showed that this series of errors had occurred because the military academy mainframe had malfunctioned.

As for why the Tianji building collapsed, they used the excuse of the building being too old, paired with a lack of proper maintenance. Although this building had been built about 100 years or so ago, it should be known that the current passing standard of a building was at least 500 years. Using this kind of excuse, did it mean this building was constructed with tofu pulp?

Regardless of whether the cadets believed it or not, or had any complaints, the military academy stuck with their answer. The incident of the Tianji building collapse was quelled just like that.

Subsequently, the Tianji Mecha Clan suffered a great decline due to this incident. For a very long period of time, they did not recover. Meanwhile, the 3rd rank Wuji Mecha Clan and the 4th rank Doha Central Mecha Clan took advantage of the situation to challenge the Tianji Mecha Clan to a mecha clan wagered fight, in order to fight for their ranking... Lacking capable fighters, and with their morale low, the Tianji Mecha Clan lost both battles, aggrieved. They slid down from their position as 2nd faction straight to the 4th faction, becoming the laughingstock of the military academy for a stint.

Under these circumstances, the Tianji Mecha Clan's Regiment Commander could only swallow this humiliation with silent resentment... it was a shame that he did not know that the main culprit of Tianji's downfall was Ling Lan of the New Cadet Regiment — if he knew, he would most certainly have used all his strength for revenge.

It should be said that Ling Lan's operation this time was very perfect. She had finished off every single person who had participated in Luo Lang's abduction, but the Tianji Mecha Clan had no clue that the source of all their woes was Luo Lang. She had kept Luo Lang out of this incident perfectly.

All of Ling Lan's detailed planning was to protect Luo Lang. Even though Luo Lang had not suffered any significant damage, she did not wish for her beloved younger brother to be the sideshow of the military academy and be gossiped about. This would place an unneeded burden on Luo Lang's spirit.

Reality proved that Ling Lan's worries were not unfounded. After Shi Mingyi's innate talent had been destroyed by Ling Lan, those 'lovers' of his who had been enthralled began to regain their clarity of mind. When they recalled everything they had done, they were exceedingly appalled and regretful, as well as filled with a burning hatred for Shi Mingyi. If they had all been level-headed people with high tolerance and resilience, perhaps this matter would have blown over in silence. However, as luck would have it, there was a student with an extremely fragile soul among the group of victims. He could not take the humiliation, thinking that his life had been utterly ruined.

That night, carrying an army knife he had created himself, he slipped into the treatment centre when the staff members were unguarded. He then dragged out Shi Mingyi from his healing pod and rapidly slashed and hacked at him till he died before committing suicide. By the time a staff member found them, it was already too late.

This incident raised a great uproar within the military academy, until the investigation team of the school found that student's suicide note and will in his dorm, thus revealing the truth of the matter. Subsequently, spiritual mutation research instructors in the military academy specially investigated Shi Mingyi's spiritual mutation ability and discovered that Shi Mingyi had the ability of hypnosis.

Only now did everyone see the true colours of Shi Mingyi. Because of this incident, the reputation of the Tianji Mecha Clan dropped once again — many members stated that they could not accept that one of their clan's vice regiment commanders was a person like that, and chose to quit the mecha clan. This was yet another nail in the coffin of the Tianji Mecha Clan.

Of course, there were also some residual effects from these events. Among those ex-subordinates of Shi Mingyi, those of them who were good-looking were all labelled as 'brokeback <sup>5</sup>', causing them to receive all kinds of strange looks within the academy. Other than one extremely tough and resilient cadet who managed to bear it all to graduate successfully, the others all found various reasons to drop out and leave the school. It could be said that these excellent youths with their bright futures had all had their futures ruined by Shi Mingyi...

On the other hand, due to Ling Lan's conscientious planning, Luo Lang was not caught up in any of this. When Luo Lang regained his awareness, he was extremely grateful, and vowed silently to himself that he would repay Ling Lan's many instances of great kindness by dedicating his future to Boss Lan!

Of course, all of this would occur only after Luo Lang was aware again. Right now, Ling Lan's great mood from demolishing Tianji's building was abruptly dampened, because she found that in the backseat of the hover car, Luo Lang's condition was deteriorating.

# Chapter 281

## Resolution!

Despite being unconscious, Luo Lang's entire face was becoming redder and redder, as his breathing became more and more laboured, and his body began to spasm. This meant that the aphrodisiac in Luo Lang's body was already in full swing.

This caused the typically composed Ling Lan to be at a loss, unsure what she should do. Would dousing Luo Lang with cold water help? Having the barest knowledge of aphrodisiacs, Ling Lan could only be clueless <sup>1</sup>.

Little Four could sense his boss's helplessness, and so quickly rushed off into the learning space to request assistance. Very soon, he returned to say happily, "Boss, Instructor Number One is looking for you."

Ling Lan's heart skipped a beat, and she hurriedly instructed, "Little Four, take care of the hover car and Luo Lang..."

Before she was even done speaking, a black vortex had appeared before her eyes, about to swallow her whole.

F\*ck, again?! Ling Lan's attention strayed for a split second, and she was pulled right into the learning space by Instructor Number One.



This was Instructor Number One's personal space. It was forever shaded by cloudy skies, a plateau shrouded in clouds at the peak of the tallest mountain. As usual, Instructor Number One was sitting on the plateau in solitude, resting his eyes as he meditated.

Ling Lan appeared out of thin air behind Instructor Number One. Seeing Instructor Number One's figure, Ling Lan called out respectfully, "Instructor Number One, greetings!"



Only then did Instructor Number One open his eyes and say dispassionately, "So you've come!"

Ling Lan could not help but grumble internally — how much faker could these words be? Instructor Number One was the one who pulled her in here... was it possible for Instructor Number One to not know when she was coming?

"I heard Little Four say that one of your friends has been dosed with aphrodisiac?" Number One spared no mind to Ling Lan's opinion, asking her about the situation without beating around the bush.

"Yes, Instructor Number One, can this aphrodisiac be cured?" Hearing what he had to say, Ling Lan's eyes lit up. Right, why had she forgotten to come ask the instructors in the learning space? Little Four's mind was still the quickest, thinking of this. Ling Lan firmly gave Little Four a mental thumbs up.

"Aphrodisiacs have no antidote," replied Instructor Number One calmly.

Ling Lan's gaze dimmed at these words — could she only watch as Luo Lang suffered?

"However, that doesn't mean there is no solution," Instructor Number One continued to say. This caused Ling Lan's initially low spirits to perk up once more. Her eyes sparkled as she looked at Instructor Number One, hoping that Instructor Number One would be able to tell her a good plan.

"Your companion's name is Luo Lang, right?" Instructor Number One did not seem to notice Ling Lan's impatience, actually beginning to stray from the topic.

Ling Lan quickly replied, "Yes, Instructor Number One. What method exactly can we use to resolve the aphrodisiac in Luo Lang's body?" *Please, the flames were already lapping at their brows... Instructor Number One, could you just be efficient and give a direct answer?!*

Instructor Number One's cold gaze swept over to stare at her, freezing Ling Lan's anxious impatience instantly, and her mind cleared.

"Calmed down yet?" huffed Instructor Number One coldly, somewhat dissatisfied over Ling Lan's loss of composure.

"Sorry, Instructor Number One, I lost control of my emotions." Realising her lapse, Ling

Lan quickly bowed her head and admitted her fault.

"Being concerned for a companion is not wrong, but remember, no matter when, you must keep calm. Otherwise, not only will you be unable to help your friend, you might even make things worse for them." Instructor Number One could understand Ling Lan's current anxious state of mind, but he could not condone it. On the battlefield, once one lost their composure, not only would they destroy themselves, they would also drag their brother-in-arms down with them — this was unacceptable.

"Understood!" Ling Lan nodded. At this moment, her gaze was no longer lost and panicked; there was only cool rationality and determination in her eyes.

Instructor Number One's icy stare was fixed on Ling Lan for several seconds. Under this stare heaped with pressure, Ling Lan did not retreat, staring right back at Instructor Number One with a steady gaze.

"Remember what you've said today!" Instructor Number One retracted his gaze in satisfaction, before continuing to say, "You've forgotten that no matter how long you spend in the learning space, only a second would have passed outside. It won't delay you from saving your friend."

Ling Lan bowed her head in shame; she had indeed forgotten about this. It was just as Instructor Number One had said — she had lost her mental balance, her calm, and her judgment. This kind of weak display was indeed worthy of a scolding.

"I remember that, Luo Lang is the one who activated the innate talent Alter Ego, and has still not found a way to control it?" Instructor Number One saw that Ling Lan was already reflecting deeply on her mistake, and so continued with their previous topic.

At this time, Ling Lan had already centred herself and was back to normal. She responded calmly, "Yes, Instructor Number One." This was also a problem that had been bothering her. She wanted to help Luo Lang, but really did not know where to start. It should be known that Luo Lang's innate talent was an excellent one, but it was just unfortunately out of control. It was like a double-edged sword; even as it cut the enemy, it would also cut its user. This was also why Ling Lan had always restricted Luo Lang from activating his innate talent before this. An unstable innate talent would not be acknowledged by either the military academy or the army divisions.

"That is indeed a very good innate talent..." At this point, Instructor Number One

glanced reflexively at Ling Lan, silently awed by how beloved Ling Lan was by the heavens. Even the companions by her side had awakened such powerful innate talents. "If you want your companion to fully master this innate talent, this aphrodisiac incident is actually a great opportunity."

Ling Lan's gaze brightened at these words, but remembering the instructor's previous counsel, she took in a deep breath and suppressed the emotional surge she felt, merely asking calmly, "May I request Instructor Number One to clarify?"

Instructor Number One nodded silently — this reaction of Ling Lan pleased him greatly. Thus, he did not make things difficult for Ling Lan any longer, directly stating the solution, "Find an enclosed space and let Luo Lang activate his innate talent. Within his innate talent, there should be one Transcendent Cold personality. As long as this personality can be brought to the surface, the aphrodisiac issue will be resolved."

"Extremely frigid?" Ling Lan was rather perplexed — how could this particular personality nullify the aphrodisiac?

"In fact, this will let him cut off all the seven emotions and six desires <sup>2</sup>, leaving him in an extremely cold and rational mode. As long as he can stay in this personality until the aphrodisiac has run its course, your companion will have safely overcome this hurdle," replied Instructor Number One.

"Will there be any latent issues?" Ling Lan asked after some thought. She did not wish for Luo Lang to have any remnant problems from this method.

"No, but in the process of activating the personality, you need to make sure that your companion retains his rationality. If the wrong personality is activated, you will need to beat it back so that another personality can be activated. And this point will require your strength to enforce. Based on your capabilities at a half step to Domain, you should have no problems," explained Number One, "Remember, you must keep him conscious. If it's not an aware personality, you must beat it back, until your companion manages to master how to activate his personalities while retaining his awareness."

"Understood, Instructor Number One. Is there anything else I should watch out for? If there is nothing, I would like to return now and resolve this as soon as possible," said Ling Lan with a grim expression. Right now, her mind was most concerned over the problem of Luo Lang and the aphrodisiac.

"Go. Once you are done helping your companion, come back and seek me out..." Instructor Number One waved his hand, and Ling Lan was sent out of the learning space. The dim space once again subsided into silence. Instructor Number One sighed, his gaze complex, before once more closing his eyes.

Several seconds later, a tear suddenly appeared three metres behind Instructor Number One. A ravishingly beautiful woman in a uniform walked out of the tear — it was Instructor Number Four. Glumly, she whined, "Big Brother, why won't you let me teach her about sex? This is obviously a great chance. Not only can she help clear the poison from her companion, she can also learn what is meant by the weaponry of women..."

"Now is still not the time. Ling Lan's Dominance Dao is gradually entering an optimum state. We cannot cause her heart to waver," said Number One coldly, " Besides, Ling Lan doesn't have any need for this type of weaponry <sup>3</sup>. You are only asked to always be prepared, just in case she cannot regain her female nature in the future..." At this point in his speech, Instructor Number One's forehead was tightly creased. Even though Ling Lan's progress on her Dominance Dao was astounding, in direct contrast, the gentle grace unique to women had slowly faded away... could this be the price of walking the Dominance Dao?

"That would be such a shame. Ling Lan has such great qualities," said Instructor Number Four with a forlorn gaze. The supple flexibility of Ling Lan's body was truly marvellous — this was closely tied to Number Nine's efforts in cultivating her. It would allow Ling Lan to require only half the effort for double the effect when learning the arts of feminine wiles. She was an absolute high-quality jade... it was such a pity she had no place in her life right now for these arts to come into play.

"If Ling Lan had not proven successful on the other fronts, I would not stop you. But reality shows that her future will be brighter if she continues to walk the Dominance Dao." Instructor Number One's tone held steely conviction. Ling Lan was undoubtedly his most prized successor; there was no other.

"Since you, Number One, have said so, what can I do? But, when Ling Lan is done with her Dominance Dao, you won't be able to stop me anymore from teaching Ling Lan the arts of female seduction." Number Four cast these words down sulkily and then returned to her own space.

She had just known her debut was not going to be so early. She still had so many years

to wait! She dearly wished Ling Lan could grow up quicker — it would be best if she could arrive at that age where her heart would flower into the spring of love... at that time, that bloody big brother could no longer prevent her from teaching Ling Lan the methods of women.

Seeing Number Four vanish from his space, Instructor Number One took in a deep breath, calming down his ruffled emotions.

Truly amazing — actually stealthily performing the art of allure right in front of his face without displaying any signs. If his will had not been strong enough, he might really have found it difficult to resist... Instructor Number One thought about how Ling Lan would also possess this type of allure skill in the future, and combine it with her current cold-domineering-swag aura... Number One's brow creased tightly once more. Alright, so he just could not imagine what that result would be like, but somehow it did not seem that it would turn out that lovely.

"Forget it, let's worry about it when we come to it." Instructor Number One was unexpectedly displaying some Ah-Q mentality <sup>4</sup> — because he too could not bear to refuse Instructor Number Four and her passion for teaching so many times. In future, Ling Lan would just have to bear with it.

Without knowing it, Ling Lan had been sold out by the Instructor Number One she deeply revered. Even someone as cold and unyielding as Instructor Number One had no choice but to give way a little when faced with the extraordinary charm and allure of Instructor Number Four.



Sure enough, Ling Lan was back in the hover car after only a second on the clock. Little Four said joyfully, "Boss, you're back? Have you found a solution?"

Ling Lan nodded and said, "Yes, Little Four. Change destinations immediately. Head for the combat hall!" To find an enclosed space, the only option was the private combat rooms at the combat hall. She did not forget to caution, "Little Four, do not leave any sign that we're going there."

"Yes, Boss!" With that, the hover car silently changed directions and began flying rapidly towards the combat hall.

# Chapter 282

## Bestial Personality!

The hover car stopped not too far from the combat hall, and Ling Lan carried Luo Lang stealthily out of the car. Due to Little Four's intervention, this hover car had registered as an empty car on the academy mainframe all this while, going around the campus on its designated route. Just like that, Ling Lan snuck Luo Lang into the combat hall without anyone the wiser.

Little Four had long found an empty private combat room, so Ling Lan dashed straight into the room with Luo Lang over her shoulder and Little Four instantly sealed the doors shut behind them.

Of course, on the records of the optical supercomputer of the combat hall, the private room they were in was still listed as unoccupied. However, Little Four used some concealment methods to hide the room from being displayed among the other empty rooms. In other words, regardless of which list one looked in — occupied or unoccupied rooms — they would be unable to find this private room Ling Lan and Luo Lang were in. Similarly, no one would notice one missing room among all the other hundred or so rooms, so this eliminated any chance of Ling Lan and Luo Lang being discovered.

Knowing that Little Four had handled all the precautionary measures, Ling Lan set Luo Lang on the ground and reached out a hand to pat Luo Lang awake.

"Boss, I feel terrible!" The moment Luo Lang woke up, he could feel his body burning up. He panted torturously, forcefully suppressing the need surging from deep within his body.

Yes, he needed comfort and relief, he wanted to take the person before him into his arms... but this person was his most beloved and revered Boss Lan! Even if Luo Lang's whole being was screaming at him with want, he held himself back from pouncing at Boss Lan.

Having impure thoughts about Boss Lan was an insult to his boss, Luo Lang felt. Of course, another reason was that Luo Lang believed pouncing forwards would be

useless anyway — Boss Lan would surely smack him dead with one slap...

Seeing that Luo Lang could still maintain some rationality even now, Ling Lan's heart eased. She had been most afraid that Luo Lang would have lost his mind completely to the drug at this point, and so be unable to activate his innate talent.

Ling Lan did not dare to delay; she quickly told the plan to Luo Lang. Luo Lang's gaze brightened at her words — if he could solve his lack of control over his innate talent from this incident, his suffering would not have been in vain. So he said, "Do it. Boss, if I really lose my mind, hit me till I wake up..."

A trace of ruthlessness appeared in Luo Lang's eyes — he had always been willing to be harsh on himself. Even if his entire body became littered with wounds, he still wanted to complete this mission. How could he, Luo Lang, lose to such a trifle as this aphrodisiac?

"Okay!" Ling Lan nodded solemnly in response. This moment did not permit her to be soft-hearted.

Luo Lang pushed aside Ling Lan's hand which had reached out to help him up, climbing to his feet on his own waveringly. In order to hold back the roaring carnal urges within his body, his glossy red lips had been bitten through in several spots. Blood welled up from the wounds to flow downwards, falling onto smooth ivory skin to pool at the hollow of his neck, strangely beautiful in its own right. However, all of Ling Lan's and Luo Lang's attention was currently focused on receiving Luo Lang's personalities. Neither noticed the odd beauty of the scene.

"Innate talent, activate!" Luo Lang used the remnants of his rational mind to activate his innate talent.

Ling Lan saw the shaking figure of Luo Lang go still all of a sudden, and then a wild presence poured out from Luo Lang's body. This aura made Ling Lan frown slightly, a trace of disappointment in her eyes, because this was not the personality Ling Lan and Luo Lang were hoping for. However, Ling Lan's disappointment came and went in a flash. Luo Lang's innate talent was unstable — activating it for a specific personality was like drawing the lottery. If they had gotten it right in one go, now that would truly be miraculous.

Luo Lang slowly raised his head. His initially clear eyes were now bloodshot — there

was no longer any trace of Luo Lang's primary identity, only endless savagery and blatant bestial desire remained in his gaze. He slowly opened his mouth wide, slipping out his tongue to lick at his bloody lips. This appearance clearly smacked of greed, but paired with Luo Lang's exquisitely beautiful face, the action actually gave Ling Lan a sense of flirtatious seduction.

"F\*ck!" Ling Lan could not help but curse internally. Who the heck was the real woman here?! The truly male Luo Lang doing such an erotic act — not only did it not cause revulsion in others, it even came off as extraordinarily mesmerising. At this moment, Ling Lan was hit hard by jealousy...

"Ah..." Though Luo Lang's small face was currently as red as a plum, brimming with seductive allure, the sound coming from his throat was the cry of a wild beast. That's right. This time, Luo Lang had awakened a bestial personality. It had no so-called rationality to speak of, only retaining the most basic bestial instincts.

Luo Lang in this identity did not recognise any Boss Lan; he only wanted to eliminate this prey before him that made him feel threatened. Thus, he lunged forwards without hesitation, both hands reaching out savagely at what he felt were the fatal points of the other.

Just as Ling Lan was about to activate her Domain and control Luo Lang, Ling Lan recalled Instructor Number One's reminder. She needed to beat back these uncontrollable personalities of Luo Lang's. Erm... beat back? Alright, she would just do it with her fists then.

Ling Lan resolutely raised her fists and punched out fiercely, striking Luo Lang's thin and lanky body full on.

Luo Lang was sent reeling back with a 'bam', his entire body crashing heavily to the ground.

*"The activation of the bestial personality has greatly increased the strength of Luo Lang's body. It's at least three times tougher than before. In the past, this level of power would have sent Luo Lang flying, but now, it is only enough to strike him down..."* Ling Lan looked at Luo Lang struggling up from the ground, and mentally began cataloguing the benefits this activated personality brought to Luo Lang. *"Also, the endurance of his body has also increased by quite a bit. This punch of mine did not injure him."*



Luo Lang had already climbed up by this time, his lips curled in a growl in response to the pain of that last hit, and then he leapt forwards once more. His speed and strength clearly showed that he was not at all affected by that first attack. It could even be said that the minor pain had made this personality of Luo Lang's even fiercer now.

"Then, let's add on three times the strength. I don't believe I can't bring you down!" Ling Lan instantly increased the power behind her fists, once again sending a fist at Luo Lang and sending him flying. Yes, the horrific strength behind her fists this time had sent Luo Lang flying the moment the hit landed. Luo Lang was seen to crash into a wall and then slide down it to slam into the ground.

"Howl!" Pained cries spilled from Luo Lang's throat. This force had made him feel intense pain. Struggling, he tried to climb to his feet once more, his crimson eyes glaring at Ling Lan before him, filled with brute ferocity and killing intent. The intense pain had caused Luo Lang's bestial instinct to become utterly berserk.

"Still not submitting? Then I'll hit you till you submit." Ling Lan sniffed coldly and charged forwards with a clenched fist. Before Luo Lang could get up, she pressed Luo Lang into the ground and began pummeling him.

Seeing this scene, Little Four's pair of little legs could not help but tremble violently... Boo hoo hoo, Boss is really too savage! He is so scary <sup>1</sup>!

This unending set of combination punches made the savage light in Luo Lang's eyes fade, his crimson eyes actually revealing a trace of meekness, as if begging for mercy. Ling Lan paused with her fists held high, harrumphed coldly, and said, "Do you submit?"

"Awoo!" A vaguely stubborn cry escaped Luo Lang's mouth. Ling Lan's eyebrow quirked, and she punched down once more, forcefully.

"Hooowl!" Luo Lang's bestial personality finally gave up and begged for mercy. This cry was unlike the one before — it carried an undertone of fawning.

An idea sparked in Ling Lan's mind. She stopped her punches and ordered, "Let the primary identity out to talk to me. And don't you dare slip away. Otherwise, every single time you come out, I'll beat you!"

Ling Lan's warning snuffed out all thoughts the bestial personality had of running away. He howled several more times pleading for mercy, and very soon one of Luo

Lang's eyes changed noticeably. The originally wild red of that eye gradually cleared up.

"Ugh, it hurts... Boss, I'm back?" Sure enough, Luo Lang's primary identity had returned.

Seeing this, Ling Lan sighed in relief, then said, "Your other bestial personality should still be here. Try and control him a bit."

That clear eye of Luo Lang's revealed pleasant surprise, while the other crimson eye narrowed, as if planning to resist. Ling Lan raised her fist without hesitation and punched right at that crimson eye.

"Ouch!" Luo Lang sucked in a cold breath. Ling Lan had not held back for this punch — the intense pain of it made both of Luo Lang's personalities moan in pain.

"I've said before, don't try to run. Actually daring to disobey my order." Ling Lan glared fiercely at that blackened panda-eyed crimson eye. Her icy gaze made the bestial personality no longer dare to rebel, obediently signifying its submission.

"Luo Lang, this is a good chance. Control it quickly," Ling Lan quickly instructed Luo Lang.

How could Luo Lang not understand at this point? Ling Lan was helping him to subdue this bestial personality. Without even thinking about it, within his spiritual realm, Luo Lang's primary identity charged without hesitation at the bestial personality beside him...

The bestial personality instinctively tried to fight back but was paralysed by an invisible force.

It turned out that Ling Lan knew the bestial personality was hiding within that one red eye of Luo Lang's, and so she had released a bolt of spiritual power to press down on Luo Lang's crimson eye. Of course, fearing that she would harm Luo Lang's primary identity, she had not dared to use a spiritual charge.

Unexpectedly, this move of Ling Lan's had unintentionally helped Luo Lang out, allowing him to successfully take control of this bestial personality.

The two personalities fought and tussled within Luo Lang's brain. Due to the pressure

from Ling Lan's spiritual power as well as the deep-seated fear the bestial personality now had over Ling Lan's previous pummelling — it was fearful that it would be beaten even worse if it defeated the primary identity — the bestial personality's fighting spirit was obviously weaker than the primary identity's. Under this panicked anxiety, its resistance grew weaker and weaker. In the end, the primary identity subdued it completely, making it fully submissive to the primary identity.

Just like that, Luo Lang was fortunate enough to conquer his first secondary personality, Bestial Instinct <sup>2</sup>. Before he could share this joyful news with Ling Lan, regaining full control of his body, that burning desire within his body rolled over him once more, and this time it was even stronger than it had been at the start.

If his body had not just been pummelled so hard by Ling Lan, his entire body's skin and muscles aching all over, he would not have been able to retain any bit of rationality. In a pained tone, Luo Lang said, "Boss, I've subdued him, but I don't think I can bear any more..."

"Hurry and activate your innate talent again," Ling Lan's expression changed drastically at his condition, and she quickly urged him to continue with the plan.

"Yes, Boss!" Luo Lang decisively withdrew the Bestial Instinct personality and activated a different personality with his innate talent. Once a personality had been conquered, as long as the primary identity did not want it to emerge, then the personality would definitely not emerge.

# Chapter 283

## The Target Appears!

Following the emergence of Luo Lang's new personality, a wave of blood-tinged killing intent swept down on Ling Lan. Ling Lan was extremely familiar with this killing intent — it was the bloody intent accumulated after killing over hundreds of thousands of people... could it be that the personality that Luo Lang had activated this time was a Killing Dao personality?

Sure enough, when Luo Lang lifted his head to look up with half-lidded eyes, a sharp and cold bolt of killing intent shot towards Ling Lan. At the same time, Luo Lang's hands shifted into an attack stance — it was the One-Inch Punch that Luo Lang was so proficient in.

*"Looks like the rational ones are harder to deal with than those irrational ones."* Observing Luo Lang's current stance which appeared to be without any notable weaknesses, Ling Lan could feel that things were now a little troublesome. This personality was giving Ling Lan a vague sense of pressure.

D\*mmmit, no wonder Instructor Number One had said that she would be able to subdue these personalities with her strength at half step to Domain. If she did not have those 10 seconds or so of Domain ability, up against this Killing Dao personality, even if she was already at the optimal peak of Qi-Jin, she would still have to expend quite a considerable amount of effort to defeat him.

As expected, when a follower was too powerful, the pressure upon a boss was great! Heaven knows what other personalities Luo Lang possessed... in particular, that Transcendent Cold personality mentioned by Instructor Number One, was very likely not an easy one to get along with either. At this thought, Ling Lan felt her teeth begin to ache inexplicably. It really wasn't easy for her to be a boss...

Ling Lan's somewhat emotional musings made her initially seamless aura ease a little — anyhow, the Killing Dao personality felt that his chance had arrived. And so, Luo Lang could be seen dashing forwards like an arrow to arrive before Ling Lan's face, his long prepared One-Inch Punch striking out at Ling Lan from the most uncomfortable angle for her.

This angle made it extremely hard for Ling Lan to block. If she chose to dodge, the Killing Dao Luo Lang would gain the upper hand. Then, even someone as powerful as Ling Lan would have a very hard time snatching back the flow of the fight anytime soon unless she immediately brought her Domain into play.

Just as the Killing Dao Luo Lang thought he had succeeded at his ploy, an extremely bizarre scene occurred. Ling Lan's waist twisted abruptly, evading this killing move of Luo Lang's with an extremely exaggerated snake-like flexible move.

Her supple and flexible body, which made Instructor Number Four salivate, had completely displayed its prowess here. Ling Lan, who was brimming with masculine strength, had still kept the physical flexibility and suppleness unique to women under Instructor Number Nine's careful tutelage. She had even learned how to utilise this suppleness to its maximum effect.

Having avoided Luo Lang's killing move, Ling Lan charged forwards to meet Luo Lang, sweeping out both her elbows to attack the other's chest.

Luo Lang reacted swiftly — the moment his blow met air, he knew that things were bad for him. He rapidly retreated, but he still was not quicker than Ling Lan's attack.

A 'bam' rang out — Ling Lan's elbows had struck Luo Lang's chest, pushing him back several paces. As a vital point had been hit directly, even though Ling Lan had already held back on her power, it was still enough to injure Luo Lang. A trickle of blood flowed out from the corner of Luo Lang's lips.

"Killing Dao personality? I'm someone who has fought my way out of the Killing Dao. Trying to beat me with the Killing Dao? In your dreams!" A cold smirk graced Ling Lan's lips.

Perhaps the other powerful personalities would cause Ling Lan to hesitate and harbour reservations, but the Killing Dao personality was not among their ranks. Ling Lan, who could be considered an old hat at the Killing Dao, naturally knew everything there was to know about the Killing Dao. Not to mention that the killing intent emanating from Luo Lang's body right now was truly no match for the killing intent hidden deep within Ling Lan's body. In other words, Luo Lang's Killing Dao personality was still rather immature right now. Perhaps after Luo Lang has been through several battlefields and killed a few more people — perhaps then this Killing Dao personality would be much more developed.

"Let me show you what a real Killing Dao is like!" An idea tumbled through Ling Lan's mind, and the blood-soaked killing intent deep within her body poured out in a torrent. The sheer thickness of it caused the temperature of the sealed room to plummet, also causing the expression of the Killing Dao personality opposite her to shift slightly, a trace of unconcealable greed revealed in its eyes.

As the Killing Dao personality was nourished by bloody killing intent, even as Ling Lan's substantial blood-soaked killing intent frightened it, it was also deeply attracted by it. Uncontrollably, it began to absorb Ling Lan's bloody killing intent, its expression carrying a trace of intoxication. Right then, even if he knew very well that consuming this blood-soaked killing intent might put him under the control of the other, the Killing Dao personality just could not resist in the face of this temptation.

Seeing this, Ling Lan's brow quirked — she had caught on to the weakness of the Killing Dao personality. The corner of her lips tilted up, and she abruptly retracted all the blood-soaked killing intent she had released. The Killing Dao personality who had been blissfully absorbing the blood-soaked killing intent suddenly found that the killing intent was gone and could not help but blink blankly. After realising what had happened, he turned a dejected gaze upon Ling Lan, a type of speechless complaint contained within it.

That look actually reminded Ling Lan of those adorable puppies in the photos she had seen in her previous life. It was the look when those puppies had had their favourite toy snatched away — unbelievably moe no matter how you looked at it <sup>1</sup>.

Suppressing the laughter in her heart, Ling Lan stared coldly at the Killing Dao personality. Her entire demeanour screamed — *I'm not going to give it to you. What can you do about it?*

Motivation to kill flashed across the Killing Dao personality's eyes. He really wanted to kill the other, snatch the other's bewitching blood-soaked killing intent for himself, and absorb it completely. But very quickly, he calmed down. Just based on the other's blood-soaked killing intent which was a hundred times more potent than his own, as well as the other's previous bizarre evasion skills and efficient attack, he was still no match for him right now, much less talk of killing the other.

Still, that thick and beguiling blood-soaked killing intent — he could not simply give up on it just like that... the Killing Dao personality looked at Ling Lan with a complicated gaze, and finally opened his mouth to speak, "Unexpectedly, you are like

me. And stronger than me!" A trace of yearning flashed through the Killing Dao personality's eyes.

"Do you want to advance?" asked Ling Lan with a quirked brow.

"Yes!" replied the Killing Dao personality resolutely. If he could just continue to absorb that killing intent, he would definitely become much stronger.

"If you're willing to submit to your primary identity, I'll allow you to fight with me once a week." Ling Lan offered her conditions.

The Killing Dao personality's eyes revealed a trace of disdain — he felt that his primary identity was just too weak, not at all worthy of commanding them, the secondary personalities. A weak primary and strong secondaries — this was the true reason why Luo Lang was unable to control his alter egos.

"Are you unwilling? Then I will make it so your primary identity never ever activates his innate talent." A smirk hung on Ling Lan's lips. "Let you train your so-called Killing Dao on your own forever in that spiritual realm inside him. Perhaps you can also become strong that way," said Ling Lan sarcastically. Hells, these secondary personalities actually dared to look down on their primary identity. Did they not consider that they still needed the primary identity to activate his innate talent? What a bunch of simple-minded fools.

Ling Lan's words made the Killing Dao personality's complexion pale — this was something he was truly afraid of. Although a large part of why they, the alter egos, were unwilling to submit to the primary identity was because the primary identity was too weak, at the same time, they were also very afraid that once the primary identity took control and had a choice, some of the more unsavoury personalities would no longer have a chance to come out. Thus, they collectively decided not to submit to the primary identity, choosing instead to fight for that one out of several tens or so chances <sup>2</sup> of coming out when the primary identity activated his innate talent.

"Think carefully about it. A chance every week to get some fresh air, or to be trapped forever in the spiritual realm. Any smart person would know the right choice." Ling Lan was extremely calm. Right now, she had the initiative and power, so she was not afraid that the other would disagree. Since the alter ego wanted to become stronger, and it also knew that she, who was proficient with the Killing Dao, was an extremely

great rival, the Killing Dao personality must know that it would require sparring with her to obtain experience in the Killing Dao.

Furthermore, she still had an ultimate move up her sleeve... that killing intent of hers was excellent nourishment for the Killing Dao personality. If the other was willing to accept her conditions, she would not mind feeding it once a week as well. After all, she could always gain more blood-soaked killing intent from the learning space, so she did not mind wasting this little bit of it <sup>3</sup>.

Seeing the gaze of the Killing Dao personality begin to waver, Ling Lan decided to up the ante. She offered up her ultimate killing move. "Also, every week, if you behave well, I can give you some of my blood-soaked killing intent."

The Killing Dao personality's eyes sparkled, "You're speaking honestly?"

"Of course! A gentleman never goes back on his word — once a promise has been made, even a team of four horses cannot take it back <sup>4</sup>!" stated Ling Lan proudly, her chin lifted high. Would she, Ling Lan, lie to her own follower?

"Deal!" replied the Killing Dao personality firmly. That final lure was too much for him, and besides, being able to get some fresh air once a week, it was worth it even if he had to submit to the primary identity.

"Then let your primary identity out now," said Ling Lan.

Very soon, Luo Lang's primary identity had emerged once again. This time, due to the Killing Dao personality's willing cooperation, it was extremely easy for Luo Lang to take control. It only took several seconds to succeed.

The moment Luo Lang took back his body, he could feel the fearsome power of the aphrodisiac. This time, he did not need Ling Lan to remind him — with the final bit of his rationality, he immediately activated the next alter ego.

Just like that, Luo Lang activated his innate talent again and again, channelling his alter egos, while again and again, Ling Lan beat them into submission, tempted them with benefits, tricked them... anything, as long as she could get these secondary personalities to agree to submit to their primary identity. Ling Lan could be said to have used up her bag of tricks. Again and again she redefined the baseline of her ethics, leading Ling Lan to silently sigh at how she really was not a good person...



Just like that, heaven knows how many alter egos she had helped Luo Lang conquer; Ling Lan was feeling rather numb by now. Faint traces of sunlight had begun to peek out from within the dark sky — it was getting ever closer to dawn. Observing from the side, Little Four could not help but become anxious.

This was because, even with Little Four's help, it would be extremely difficult to sneak back to their living quarters without any trace during broad daylight. Little Four did not know whether he should manipulate things to create the illusion that Boss and Luo Lang had left the villa early this morning to come train in the combat hall...

Alright, there was still that final bit of time. Little Four decided to wait a little longer in patience. If daylight truly broke, then he would ask his boss whether he should carry out his plan.

In the meantime, Luo Lang had activated yet another new personality. The emergence of the personality brought along a surge of ice-cold air, causing the temperature within the private room to drop noticeably.

The arrival of this chill made Ling Lan's spirits rally — could it be that the Transcendent Cold personality she had been waiting for all this while had finally appeared?

Luo Lang's cold and unfeeling gaze swept over, and when he saw Ling Lan, his brow furrowed and he said "So it's you."

Ling Lan was taken aback — she had met this personality before? She abruptly recalled that this personality had appeared before not too long ago on the stage during the wagered fight with Leiting. He had been extreme in his cold rationality — paying the price of his own arm to perfectly ensnare the opponent, achieving an upset by defeating his stronger opponent from a weaker position. Undoubtedly, this was a personality who could be extremely cruel to himself for the sake of victory.

"Severing one's seven emotions and six desires, only allowing oneself to retain endlessly cold rationality, and taking everything into consideration without qualms that could lead to victory... you should be that Transcendent Cold personality." Ling Lan believed that the other was certainly the target she had been seeking. As expected, a tough opponent.

"That's right. It's unexpected that you actually know all those details about me. Not

simple at all... no wonder the primary identity is willing to recognise you as boss," responded the Transcendent Cold personality dispassionately. Of course, a hint of contempt could still be discerned from his tone.

# Chapter 284

## Scheming!

"I've been looking for you for a long time," said Ling Lan coldly, "I think you should already be aware of the current condition of this body."

"Seeking me out just for this?" The Transcendent Cold personality figured out why he had been brought out and could not help but scorn, "This kind of little problem, and he already can't take it? That's too disgraceful."

Due to the effects of the aphrodisiac, even though Luo Lang's face had been punched till it was black and blue, it was still flushed an eye-catching rosy pink. However, his eyes now were clear, as if not at all affected by the chaotic desire within his body. Sure enough, the Transcendent Cold personality possessed the ability to detach himself from all seven emotions and six desires, and was thus able to be so serene in the face of disaster.

However, Ling Lan was beginning to get a vague sense that something was not right. She began to think back on how when each personality had appeared, those personalities had not lost control due to the aphrodisiac — they had not lost their minds and behaved wildly. Even when that mindless Bestial Instinct personality had appeared, what he had displayed had only been the basic instinct of a wild beast and nothing else...

Could it be that as long as another personality took charge, the effects of the aphrodisiac would actually be contained? In that case, why would Luo Lang suffer the ravaging of the aphrodisiac every time after he conquered those personalities? Ling Lan was rather perplexed.

All these doubts merely flashed through her mind — Ling Lan did not have the time to ruminate on them. Now, the most important thing was still helping Luo Lang to conquer this Transcendent Cold personality so that Luo Lang could fully overcome the effects of the aphrodisiac.

Ling Lan did not think that the aphrodisiac of this future world would be so strong, lasting over the course of an entire night. Every time they had switched alter egos, she

had seen Luo Lang's agonised expression of forced tolerance in between. This made Ling Lan rather worried about Luo Lang's body. She wondered whether it was too much for him and had harmed the very foundations of his body... she hoped that it was truly as Instructor Number One had said, that there would be no negative aftereffects!

Ling Lan suppressed the worry in her heart and began to negotiate with the Transcendent Cold personality. "Speak. What would make you willing to submit to the primary identity?"

It would be best if they could avoid a fight — whenever Ling Lan encountered a rational personality that could communicate, she would not resort to violence right away, instead going into negotiation mode first. Ling Lan herself was afraid that Luo Lang's body would not be able to withstand all this pummelling.

"Submit? He's not worthy enough yet," Transcendent Cold responded icily.

"Yet? Which means that it's possible in the future? Does this mean that you actually think well of him?" asked Ling Lan with a quirked brow.

"He is our primary identity. Once he has become stronger than us, we will naturally submit to him," Transcendent Cold replied evenly. This was the truth. Luo Lang's innate talent was out of his control only because the primary identity was too weak, so the secondary personalities could not be blamed for running wild.

"Why don't you all try submitting now? This is actually beneficial for you all as well," suggested Ling Lan.

Transcendent Cold shook his head bleakly and refused, saying, "We have our pride. We only submit to the strong. If the primary identity never finds a way to be stronger than us, he will forever be unable to control us. This is the price he must pay. There are no shortcuts."

"Is that so?" Ling Lan shot back with a half-smile. The reality before them now proved that shortcuts did exist — they just had not been discovered yet before this.

Ling Lan's rebuttal made Transcendent Cold's breath choke. He fell silent for several seconds before opening his mouth to say, "Of course, it's not really that they don't exist. If there is a boss who gains the willing acknowledgement of all of the secondary personalities, we can listen to that boss's orders and recognise the primary identity as our main host."

The Transcendent Cold personality stared coolly at Ling Lan and continued, "It seems that you have discovered this shortcut. Those subdued secondary personalities were most likely conquered by the primary identity in this way. If you defeat me, I too will be willing to submit to you. At that time, you can ask me to submit to the primary identity. I will be willing to obey."

"So that's how it is." Only now did Ling Lan truly understand. Instructor Number One had suggested this method, not for her to seek out the Transcendent Cold personality, but for her to subdue each and every one of these alter egos to help Luo Lang gain complete control.

"Who knows how many alter egos are left... Do I have to keep fighting till the last one to end this?" Ling Lan muttered to herself, chuckling wryly internally. If luck would have it, she might just have to spend days here — this was truly an onerous task. That's why she had said that being a boss was not so easy...

"No need. As long as you defeat me, the other secondary personalities will acknowledge you too. Because I am the strongest one among all the alter egos." Transcendent Cold heard Ling Lan's mutters, and replied. Even though his tone was exceedingly cool and level, Ling Lan could still hear the pride and confidence of Transcendent Cold from his words.

That aside, Transcendent Cold's words had also explained why Instructor Number One had said that she must seek out the Transcendent Cold personality. It looked like Luo Lang did not need him specifically to overcome the crisis of the aphrodisiac — rather, Ling Lan needed to defeat the other so Luo Lang could truly master his innate talent.

This so-called chance was just Instructor Number One's excuse to get her to act. No wonder as time passed, Luo Lang's resistance to the aphrodisiac had seemed to get stronger and stronger. Unlike at the start when he had almost lost his reason, he had always been able to successfully activate his innate talent, holding on till the emergence of the next alter ego. In fact, as he had been fighting, the aphrodisiac was already being diffused. It was as the Transcendent Cold personality had said at the start — the aphrodisiac within Luo Lang's body was just a trivial matter, because the drug was already nearing its end, and the effects were no longer that strong.

At this thought, the tension in Ling Lan's heart eased. Since the aphrodisiac was no longer an issue, as long as she defeated this personality before her now and completed

the task of letting Luo Lang freely control his innate talent, she would have achieved a rousing success.

"Fine. Let me try then and see how strong exactly is this Transcendent Cold personality." Ling Lan calmly stretched out her right hand, signalling for the Transcendent Cold personality to make his move.

This was the stance a superior used against an inferior — with regards to this, the Transcendent Cold personality did not feel offended or underestimated. This was because the moment he came out, he had sensed the horrifying strength hidden deeply within Ling Lan's body. He knew very well that this person before his eyes was not that opponent he had met that first time he had emerged. This opponent was much stronger, but that did not mean that he had no chance of winning.

A mocking smile appeared on the lips of the Transcendent Cold personality. With a spring of his feet, his figure suddenly disappeared, and in the next second, his fist had arrived before Ling Lan's face. This speed of his had clearly broken past Luo Lang's original speed, hitting Luo Lang's physical limits...

"Good!" Ling Lan yelled out in approval. Her head tilted to one side, evading the punch, and her palm struck back without any hesitation, aiming for the only opening in this attack of Luo Lang's, the only fatal weakness — his chest!

Ling Lan thought that Transcendent Cold would choose to evade, because if this palm strike landed, based on the strength differential between Luo Lang and her, Luo Lang was certain to be heavily injured. Someone proficient in combat would not be so idiotic as to welcome death...

However, Transcendent Cold's actions shocked Ling Lan — the other did not dodge, charging forwards fearlessly instead.

*"F\*ck, a lunatic!"* Ling Lan had not expected the other's actions, and since the other was charging forwards intentionally, Ling Lan's palm made contact with Luo Lang's chest in the blink of an eye.

There was already no time to change moves — Ling Lan could only pull back the powerful internal energy behind her palm. Thus, despite striking Luo Lang's chest, as there was no internal energy behind it, her palm did not harm Luo Lang. But right then, there was a sudden twist — Luo Lang's other long readied fist with three layers

of One-Inch Punch struck out in a diagonal attack at Ling Lan's lower side.

Stuck in the tail-end of her move, Ling Lan had no possibility of evading. Still, who was Ling Lan? The reflexes of one at the optimal peak of Qi-Jin was incomparable to that of one at early stage Qi-Jin. Ling Lan's other hand swept down into a block and the two forces collided. Powerful forces erupted between the two of them.

A 'boom' of collision, and the two were thrown back uncontrollably. They each stumbled back several paces before finding their footing again.

Even Ling Lan, due to insufficient preparation and a hasty block, now felt heated blood roiling in her chest, a surge of copper-sweet stench pushing at the back of her throat. It should be said that the heartless scheming of Transcendent Cold, in tandem with the three layers of One-Inch Punch he used, had given Ling Lan a bitter taste of trouble.

"Actually daring to use Luo Lang's life to trap me..." Ling Lan's eyes turned bleak and cold, freezing air beginning to emit from her body. At this moment, Ling Lan's wrath had been piqued.

She found that this Transcendent Cold personality before her was truly without all seven emotions and six desires, only retaining endless cold rationality. For the sake of victory, he had even factored Ling Lan's brotherly affection for Luo Lang into his calculations... From the start, he had known that his attack would be fruitless, but he also knew that Ling Lan cared for his body very much and would not really want to hurt him, and this was his chance. Frankly, he had almost succeeded. However, Ling Lan was just too strong — despite falling into his trap, she had still managed to withstand his attack by relying on her own superior strength.

"If your heart had not had any reluctance, my plan would not have succeeded," said the Transcendent Cold personality, "Hence, this is not my fault."

At these words, Ling Lan almost spewed out a mouthful of blood. So she was the only one to blame for taking this hit? But thinking about it, what the Transcendent Cold personality was saying was not wrong either — if she had not been reluctant to harm Luo Lang, the other would not have been able to trap her.

"How bloody despicable. Are you not at all worried I would just go through with it for real and kill you?" asked Ling Lan sullenly.

"If that happened, then it would be my mistake. Death would be well deserved." The

Transcendent Cold personality's expression was indifferent. In his mind, if his carefully thought-out plan had not succeeded, death would be a proper price to pay — there was nothing to argue about there.

Facing this emotionless Transcendent Cold personality who only knew how to scheme, unafraid of death and impervious to flattery and petty tricks, Ling Lan felt somewhat like her hands were tied. Hells, this personality was just too troublesome to handle — did she really have to fight with lethal means?

It had to be said that the Transcendent Cold personality had indeed latched onto Ling Lan's vital point. Ling Lan could not bear to harm Luo Lang — even though Luo Lang currently looked rather battered, his entire face a swathe of black and blue, his body swollen red and bruised with no patch of unmarked skin, all of these injuries were only skin-deep. Luo Lang would only need to lie in a healing pod for one to two hours, and he would be back to normal. However, if Ling Lan had really been ruthless and injured Luo Lang grievously, Luo Lang may just have to return to the Military Medical Research Centre and would not have been able to be discharged for 10 days to half a month... and this was why Ling Lan was now caught in a dilemma.

*"Boss, dawn is breaking. Should I create an illusion of you and Luo Lang coming out from the villa this morning to come spar at the combat hall?"* Right then, Little Four, who could delay no longer, piped up with an alert within Ling Lan's mindspace.

An idea sparked in Ling Lan's mind at these words. Yes, by creating this illusion, she would have a reason to send Luo Lang back to the Military Medical Research Centre to trouble Li Shiyu again...

She could say that, as they had fought, Luo Lang's old wounds had flared up again. As his primary physician, Li Shiyu would need to take responsibility for this.



# Chapter 285

## Completion!

At this thought, Ling Lan's lips could not help but curve up into a slight smile. Since she now had a way to resolve Luo Lang's injuries, then there was no reason for her to be merciful and hold back.

Ling Lan clasped her hands together tightly, her fingers emitting the sounds of cracking joints. This action made Transcendent Cold's gaze shift, because he had sensed that his initial plans were likely to be useless now... still, could the other really bear to be vicious? If that was the case, then, for the primary identity to have acknowledged such a person as boss, wasn't he too bad at judging character and also too pitiful?

Before the Transcendent Cold personality could ascertain Ling Lan's true thoughts, Ling Lan leapt forwards. This time, she was prepared to initiate attack. A fist was sent flying straight at Luo Lang's face. The force behind the punch was fierce and domineering — even before it could touch him, the Transcendent Cold personality could already feel the horrific power contained in the fist.

His countenance shifted, and with a quick slide step, he dodged this attack of Ling Lan's.

There was a loud boom as Ling Lan's fist struck the floor of the private room. The ground instantly split apart under the tremendous force.

In fact, the private room was built with high-tech ultra-durable materials, capable of withstanding attacks of Qi-Jin below Domain stage. The effect being displayed right now was also a product of the technology — after 10 seconds, the ground would be restored to normal.

Seeing this great crevasse appear on the private room's floor, the Transcendent Cold personality confirmed that this person across from him was now truly determined to be ruthless. At this moment, he could not help but scorn his own primary identity once more, thinking that his primary identity really had bad judgement. His boss must not care much for him at all; otherwise, how could he have switched over to become so

vicious so easily? Damm\*t, what a failure of a primary identity.

Since he could no longer count on the other's mercy, the Transcendent Cold personality abandoned his original plans without any hesitation, beginning to look for other openings to exploit.

Meanwhile, the two of them could be seen darting around each other, one attacking one evading, actually fighting on pretty even ground. It had to be said that Transcendent Cold was the strongest among all the alter egos because he utilised Luo Lang's physical body to its maximum ability — whether it was in terms of speed or power, he had pushed it to the limit. For Ling Lan to defeat the other, it was likely impossible within a short period of time.

This was because the other was calculating the best evasion path for himself under his body's constraints. Transcendent Cold's formidable calculation ability had allowed him to escape by a hair's breadth several times already.

"Looks like it's impossible without using Domain," thought Ling Lan.

Frankly, with Ling Lan's capabilities, it was not impossible to take the other down if she went all out physically. However, she did not dare to use all her strength at optimal peak Qi-Jin, much less the threefold version of One-Inch Punch. This greatly restricted Ling Lan's attack range, which was why Transcendent Cold could escape so many times.

The strength Ling Lan was currently using was carefully calculated so that even if she hit Luo Lang, Luo Lang would only be heavily injured, but no great tragedy would occur. If she added an extra share of strength, she was afraid she might accidentally snuff out Luo Lang's little life.

Right then, the Transcendent Cold personality was finding that even if he schemed a lot, it was futile against Ling Lan who was several times stronger than him. Once strength reached a certain degree, all schemes would become useless.

The Transcendent Cold personality experienced the emotion called hopelessness for the first time... however, it was not in his character to admit defeat just like that. So, he decided to trade injury for injury; this was an extremely helpless kind of ploy — if he was not at his wits' end, he would not resort to this willingly.

Both fighters intended to bring this fight to a close — when Ling Lan attacked again

this time, the Transcendent Cold personality did not dodge. He immediately raised his right fist and with a loud bellow, the 4th form of One-Inch Punch was executed without hesitation...

Seeing this, rage flickered in Ling Lan's eyes. Without any hesitation whatsoever, she yelled out, "Domain, activate!"

In the private room, a super mini Domain appeared, instantly wrapping around Luo Lang's entire body. In the midst of performing the 4th form of One-Inch Punch, Luo Lang was frozen in that stance just like that, suspended in the air, immobile.

The smaller the Domain, the longer Ling Lan could maintain it. Of course, even with the smallest Domain, Ling Lan could only hold it for no more than one minute. As for this tiny Domain, Ling Lan could hold it for approximately 40 seconds. Although it was not very long, it was more than enough to subdue the Transcendent Cold personality.

"D\*mn it!" Ling Lan roared, her fist hurtling over to strike the immobile Luo Lang squarely. At the instant her fist struck, Ling Lan dismissed the Domain holding Luo Lang secure.

Still, the Transcendent Cold personality no longer had any way of dodging her attack. The fist landed squarely and Luo Lang's entire person was sent flying to crash heavily against the wall of the private room and then bounce off it to crumple to the ground.

A heaving sound, and Luo Lang was spewing out several mouthfuls of blood on the ground. Ling Lan had not held back in this strike; her finely calculated internal energy had been borne by Luo Lang in its entirety. It was unsurprising that Luo Lang had received severe damage.

"Do you know? I really hate you right now. With Luo Lang's current abilities, using the 4th form of One-Inch Punch will cause the Qi-Jin in his body to run rampant. An unlucky chance could cause his combat realm <sup>1</sup> to fall. The first time, on the arena stage during the wagered fight, you did not want to lose to an outsider and used it. Even though you paid the price of your right arm, I tolerated it... but now, just because you did not want to lose to me, you chose to use this type of move that would deal 100 damage to the opponent but deal 1000 damage to yourself <sup>2</sup>. Are you a godd\*mn bloody idiot? What Transcendent Cold? You are just a freakin' brainless blockhead! Calm and level-headed my ass!"

Ling Lan, who was extremely incensed by the other's actions, had a stony expression on her face as she grabbed the Transcendent Cold personality off the ground and began rapping him smartly on the head with her fists, berating him fiercely all the way.

This attitude of Ling Lan's made the Transcendent Cold personality instantly descend into a confused stupor. Perhaps, in his world, this type of fire-breathing dragon behaviour was completely incomprehensible... wasn't he the one who had gotten injured? Why was the opponent so enraged? Perhaps he had been tricked from the start... perhaps the other's affection for his primary identity was in fact sincere, and the other had not been utterly merciless?

Taking stock of his own injuries, Transcendent Cold believed his judgment was accurate. He should have been dejected by the discovery, because he had actually been fooled by the opponent and had lost his chance to win. But for some reason, his heart actually felt lighter, as if this was how things should be.

Transcendent Cold's stunned gaze had never shifted from Ling Lan's face — fuming, Ling Lan did not have any patience to speak of. With an angry glare, she said, "What are you looking at? Do you godd\*mn submit or not?"

"..." Transcendent Cold let his silence speak for him. He was already having his head rapped while he was in the other's hold — how could he not submit?

Seeing Transcendent Cold's cooperative attitude, Ling Lan's mood improved. She patted Luo Lang gruffly on the head and said, "If you had just done so from the start, wouldn't things have been better?" Perhaps noticing the Transcendent Cold personality's dejected expression, Ling Lan added, "Also, I'm your boss. What's there to be discouraged about in losing to your boss? How pathetic."

He was pathetic? Well, at least he's still better than the primary identity, right...? The Transcendent Cold personality could not help but scrunch his brow; he was unwilling to accept this critique. "But the primary identity being so weak, won't Boss look down on him?" Subconsciously, the Transcendent Cold personality had actually begun to worry about the place his primary identity held in their boss's heart.

"Why don't you let the primary identity out now?" Ling Lan sent another fist flying to beat away Transcendent Cold's gloomy emotions. Transcendent Cold did not want to suffer any more of Boss's fists, so he could only obediently let the primary identity out.

"Boss, you've settled yet another personality?" The moment Luo Lang came out, he asked happily. Gathering one personality after another under his control, Luo Lang could feel himself becoming stronger. His innate talent was also beginning to feel increasingly easier to wield.

"Yes, congratulations on escaping from your abyss of misery." Seeing Luo Lang appear, Ling Lan's initial wrathful expression calmed into cool stoicism once more, and her tone was as indifferent as it ever was. Luo Lang, as the primary identity, did not sense anything out of the ordinary, but the Transcendent Cold personality on the other side could sense the subtle change in Ling Lan's aura. It was still cold, her voice just as cool, but compared to when she had been fighting with him, her aura was actually considerably warmer. So apparently even this icy attitude of their boss would change when interacting with the different personalities.

For the first time, the Transcendent Cold personality felt the emotion called jealousy. He actually began to feel envious of his primary identity, who was able to receive Boss's care and affection.

Luo Lang was a clever babe — hearing Ling Lan's words, he instantly reacted with joy, "You've found the Transcendent Cold personality?"

"Hn. Go subdue it quickly. Your aphrodisiac is also mostly settled," said Ling Lan calmly.

"Don't try to resist. A gentleman should never go back on his word!" Ling Lan's tone shifted abruptly, becoming extraordinarily frigid. Transcendent Cold knew that these words were directed at him. He was just another personality in the same body, but the treatment he received was so different. This tone now and that tone earlier were so obviously worlds apart... Transcendent Cold thought to himself dejectedly <sup>3</sup>.

Luo Lang could not know Transcendent Cold's thoughts; heeding Boss Lan's words, he pounced at the Transcendent Cold personality beside him. The moment he touched the other, the primary identity could sense how powerful the other was. There were no openings for him to attack, so he could only stare at the other helplessly.

"What an idiot!" Transcendent Cold saw this pathetic display of the primary identity, and barked reproachfully. Still, he did not plan to go back on his promise with Ling Lan. Thus, he could only suppress his spiritual power as much as he could, squeezing it down smaller and smaller, until the point where the primary identity could overpower him.

The two personalities began to merge — the Transcendent Cold personality was experiencing everything the primary identity had been through, including those experiences as the other grew up and his bonds with those companions of his...

D\*mmmit, the primary identity was really too bloody weak. If he had been the primary identity, the prized seat of Boss's first follower would definitely belong to him <sup>4</sup> and not that simple-minded Qi Long... Transcendent Cold thought moodily to himself.

This time, the process of subduing the Transcendent Cold personality took much longer than with the other personalities. Day was upon them, and the combat hall was beginning to become crowded. Some were there to enter Closed Door Meditation and seek out insight, while others were there to practise their combat arts. All the students selected their own private rooms and went off to do their respective things. There were also those students who had no classes today, who did not want to log on to the Mecha World, who had come to the combat hall looking for a spar or two.

Finally, Luo Lang's tightly shut eyes opened. A gleam of cold light came and went, and then Luo Lang could be seen to laugh and say, "Boss, it's done."

"How does your body feel? That is, the aphrodisiac..." This was what Ling Lan was most concerned about.

# Chapter 286

## Misdiagnosis!

"It doesn't feel that strong anymore. After subduing the Transcendent Cold personality, the effects have eased greatly. As expected, the Transcendent Cold personality is the sure-kill move against aphrodisiacs," reported Luo Lang excitedly in his cluelessness.

At his side, Ling Lan's cold face could not help but quiver slightly. Fine, she was a bad person. She absolutely would not tell Luo Lang the truth — that, in fact, all his injuries this night were actually unnecessary.

"How are your injuries?" Ling Lan asked, scratching the bridge of her nose, still feeling somewhat guilty.

Luo Lang chuckled wryly, "Not very good. I'm injured pretty badly. Looks like I'll have to go to the treatment centre for another round of treatment."

"It's better to go to the Military Medical Research Centre," said Ling Lan.

The smile on Luo Lang's face stiffened, as if thinking of something. Ling Lan raised a brow and asked, "Recalling that scumbag? Afraid now?"

Luo Lang shook his head and said, "No, that scumbag has been handled by Boss. What do I have to be afraid of?" That said, a hint of coldness appeared on his face. "I believe that he must be wishing he were dead right now."

Luo Lang had full faith in Ling Lan, believing that his boss would not let the other off so easily. Even though his boss might not have taken that pervert's life to minimise the outcry from this incident, his boss would definitely have used some other method to destroy the other, such as crushing the other's future... this kind of revenge method was also something he approved of. Hating a person did not mean the other person had to die... destroying that which he prized most — now that was satisfying.

"Don't worry. He will spend the rest of his life in a daze. No one knows you had been abducted. You only made a visit to the Military Medical Research Centre, that's all..."

Ling Lan conveyed Shi Mingyi's final outcome in a few short phrases, also telling Luo Lang that this incident would end here. There would be no continuation.

"Thank you, Boss!" Luo Lang smiled brightly at these words. Despite the mottled bruises on his face, this smile lit up his lovely features, still making others feel that his smile was very beautiful.

"It's pretty late. We should hurry to the Military Medical Research Centre. The earlier you're treated, the earlier you'll be back on your feet." Ling Lan indicated for Little Four to open the room door, prepared to take Luo Lang to the Military Medical Research Centre.

Luo Lang's smile stiffened and he said with a grimace, "Boss, can we not go there?"

"Why?" Ling Lan asked curiously.

Luo Lang's body could not help but shudder a little, a trace of fear on his face as he said hesitatingly, "The medical agent Li Shiyu uses on us causes too much suffering?" He then proceeded to tell Ling Lan every single one of the effects the medical agent produced in their bodies. Ling Lan's eyes flickered in surprise, and even Little Four within the mindspace was gaping in shock — that medical agent Luo Lang was describing... why did it sound so much like an enhanced version of gene agents?

Could it be that Li Shiyu had used a medical agent with a similar makeup to gene agents? Ling Lan rubbed her jaw, her expression thoughtful. This would explain why Luo Lang's body had had a significant elevation in baseline. It would appear that that Li Shiyu was much more capable than she had imagined.

*"Little Four, tell me. Letting that Li Shiyu become the exclusive army doctor of our team, don't you think that's a good idea?"* She could not let such a capable military doctor get away.

A clear curve adorned Ling Lan's lips. Taken in combination with her calculative gaze, Little Four could not help but shiver and say hurriedly, *"Yes, Li Shiyu is pretty good! Boss is wise!"*

After all, he did not even know Li Shiyu that well, so why should he care how things would turn out for him if he fell into his boss's hands? He only needed to keep his boss happy and that would do. Little Four decisively pushed Li Shiyu into the fire pit!



Having resolved the issue of the team's military doctor <sup>1</sup>, Ling Lan carted Luo Lang off to the Military Medical Research Centre in a great mood. The moment they arrived at the doorway, they bumped into someone. Ling Lan glanced nonchalantly at the other, and her first thought was that the other seemed somewhat familiar.

Of course, Ling Lan did not take it to heart. She was just about to brush by and enter the doors when that person greeted her on his own with a smile, "Morning, Junior Ling Lan!"

Ling Lan had no choice but to stop. Even though Ling Lan appeared very aloof on the surface — her entire body emanating a cold air, and her demeanour seemingly extremely unapproachable — she was actually a very polite and courteous good child. Generally, anyone who greeted her in a friendly manner would not be spurned by Ling Lan.

"Morning, Senior!" Ling Lan responded lightly.

"Hoho, looks like Junior does not recognise me. I'm Li Lanfeng of the 4th year Mecha Piloting Special Class. Last time, after your arena battle, we met at the treatment centre." Hearing Ling Lan's response, Li Lanfeng could tell the other did not know who he was. Thus, he introduced himself good-naturedly, also reminding the other when they had met.

Ling Lan finally recalled who this person before her was. Back then at the treatment centre, he was the one who had spurred Li Shiyu with one phrase into taking over the treatment of her three brothers. At this thought, Ling Lan nodded and said, "So it's Senior Li. Hello."

"Why has Junior come here today?" Li Lanfeng asked curiously. His gaze swept over to see Luo Lang, whose terrible condition was prefaced by swollen eyes and a bruised nose, and instantly cried out, "Eh, why is this junior in such a terrible condition?" He peered closely at the injured person for a long while then cried out again, "Isn't this Junior Luo Lang? Hadn't you already recovered a few days ago and had been discharged?"

Luo Lang laughed awkwardly, and Ling Lan helped him to reply, "Today, we went out early to the combat hall for a spar, and found some minor problem with Luo Lang's body. So we're here to see Dux Li to figure things out."

"I was just about to go see Young Master Shiyu myself. Let's go together," suggested Li Lanfeng, sensing Ling Lan's anxiety. And so the three of them strode together into the Military Medical Research Centre to seek out Li Shiyu.



At this time, Li Shiyu was in the process of checking the data charting the stats of Qi Long and Li Yingjie from the night before. Seeing the numbers improve day by day, he let out an internal sigh of relief. It looked like the gene agent S-modification did indeed have a significant effect in increasing one's physical constitution. Even with regards to wound recovery, it had strengthened that by several folds — another ten more days or so, and Qi Long and Li Yingjie would probably be fully healed, ready to go back and continue attending physical training.

Thus, he was in high spirits when he suddenly heard someone call out to him from behind, "Young Master Shiyu, hello!"

Li Shiyu turned his head and saw that it was Li Lanfeng. He could not help but smile and say, "Lanfeng, so you've come." During this period of time, Li Lanfeng would pop by to visit him whenever he had the time; this had caused the relationship between the two to become extremely close.

However, Li Shiyu's good mood came to a screeching halt when he saw the person standing next to Li Lanfeng.

"What are you here for?" Li Shiyu rolled his eyes at Ling Lan, his entire face darkening instantly. He was still bearing a grudge over the incident of Ling Lan threatening him.

Ling Lan seemed oblivious to Li Shiyu's displeasure, saying calmly, "I've come here, to return Luo Lang to you." This statement caused Luo Lang, who was standing behind her, to blink blankly, extremely bewildered at why his Boss Lan would say such a thing.

"Return? What do you mean?" Li Shiyu was similarly taken aback, staring at Ling Lan uncomprehendingly.

"His old injuries have flared up again. Who should I look for if not you?" The corners of Ling Lan's lips quirked. Her cold gaze settled firmly on him, and that gaze was so sharp that Li Shiyu's heart skipped a beat or two.

Luo Lang secretly wiped away the cold sweat which had sprung out from his forehead at these words. *Boss, you're truly too black-bellied... actually daring to blame these injuries on Dux Li.*

Li Shiyu composed himself, then rebutted fiercely, "How can this be? When he left, all his numbers were clearly as good as they could ever be..."

"But, he was really injured." Ling Lan pointed at Luo Lang, signalling for Li Shiyu to go and examine him.

Li Shiyu stepped forward and felt Luo Lang's pulse. His expression changed instantly, and he hurriedly felt Luo Lang's chest, checking on his internal injuries, and then turned to glare furiously at Ling Lan. "Why were you so vicious?"

Ling Lan calmly tugged on her own sleeves to straighten them and replied coolly, "You think I would be so vicious while sparring with my own brother?"

"Then where did these internal injuries of his come from? Are you saying that someone else assaulted Luo Lang?" Li Shiyu asked angrily, pointing at Luo Lang's chest.

"Well, of course there was no assault. Early this morning, Luo Lang and I went to spar for a bit in a combat room. We only exchanged a few moves and this was the result," Ling Lan replied calmly, "I only used the strength level Luo Lang was used to from before, but when I hit Luo Lang, he actually became so injured. This made me suspect that Luo Lang's body may not have been fully recovered to begin with, and you actually discharged him<sup>2</sup>?"

"Before he was discharged, I checked to make sure all of his stats were within normal standards before letting him go." Hearing Ling Lan questioning his professionalism, Li Shiyu glared at her. This was something he could not accept.

"I believe you, but I don't trust these machines." Ling Lan thumped a treatment device by her side, "Some injuries may have always been hiding within a patient's body, but those diagnostic devices may never find them. For example, Major General Bob of the Caesar Empire had similarly been declared completely healed by the best hospital, but half a year later, an old wound reared up again, and in the end he could not be saved despite emergency care... or like with Governor Thira of the Ayin Alliance, who, also due to misdiagnosis, missed the best window of time for treatment and so had to retire

prematurely. Even in our Federation, this type of misdiagnoses is not few in number... do you need me to list out the examples? Li Shiyu, do you think you can say confidently and unreservedly that these examination devices are truly, completely foolproof?"

Ling Lan queried forcefully as she read out the name list of misdiagnosis cases that Little Four had compiled. This caused Li Shiyu's face to flush and pale erratically, but he just could not find any words to rebut the other because everything Ling Lan had said was fact. Even his instructors would never dare to give an absolute guarantee.

"But, the accuracy of the machines is as high as 99.97%..." Li Shiyu protested weakly. Although there was indeed the chance for misdiagnosis, the odds of it happening were just too low to consider.

"So, there is still a 0.03% chance of error. Can you guarantee that Luo Lang does not fall into this category?" Ling Lan abruptly interrupted Li Shiyu, eyes trained intently on the other as she asked this question.

Li Shiyu's mouth flapped open and closed, but he found that he could say nothing definite. Even though he believed deep down that he had not misdiagnosed Luo Lang, when it came to medicine, there was indeed no way to guarantee a hundred percent safety.

"I heard that, a truly exceptional military doctor is able to determine on his own whether a person has fully recovered, before matching his personal judgement with the output of the diagnostic machines. This basically eliminates all possibility of a misdiagnosis. I would like to ask... Dux Li, are you already at this level?" Ling Lan was unrelenting, chasing Li Shiyu with another question.

# Chapter 287

## Apprehension!

Li Shiyu could only continue to remain silent, because his medical skills were indeed still not yet at that level. Typically, military doctors who achieved that stage were those who had been practicing for up to 20 years and more; only accumulated medical experience could allow them to do so.

"If you cannot do that, then how can you argue with me that Luo Lang's injuries are not a relapse of his old injuries?" asked Ling Lan with a raised brow.

*Boss, you're so despicable!* Little Four and Luo Lang saw Li Shiyu being questioned so harshly by their boss that he was completely flummoxed, and they could only shake their heads mutely and sigh.

So easily and casually shunting responsibility to the other, without having to owe the other anything to boot... once more, it was proven why only Boss Lan could be their boss. Sure enough, Boss Lan was stronger than them on all fronts. Even in terms of despicableness, this was so.

Li Shiyu's chest heaved up and down, making Ling Lan rather worried about whether he would pass out from anger. She could not help but begin reflecting on whether she had taken things too far... (And you only know this now?) <sup>1</sup>

"Fine. Consider this occasion my fault and just let Luo Lang return for treatment." Li Shiyu finally managed to suppress his anger and replied through clenched teeth. He glared fiercely at Luo Lang, causing Luo Lang to feel a chill penetrate straight to his very bones.

Seeing that stormy expression of Li Shiyu's, Luo Lang turned a pitiful look on his boss, pleading — could he not be treated by Li Shiyu again? Ling Lan pretended to see nothing, but she was cheering for Luo Lang inside her heart. In order to become even stronger, oh Luo Lang, why don't you just endure this suffering for a while? Ling Lan believed that leaving Luo Lang at the Military Medical Research Centre would definitely yield excellent results.

After resolving the issue of Luo Lang, Ling Lan cheerfully left the Military Medical Research Centre. Seeing this, Li Lanfeng quickly said goodbye to Li Shiyu and left as well. He had borne witness to all of Ling Lan's cutting questions earlier and knew that Li Shiyu must be in a terrible mood right now. He was not going to stay and chance earning any spillover hate value.

Li Lanfeng had not forgotten that he had entered together with Ling Lan — if Li Shiyu thought he was Ling Lan's companion, then it would be a tragedy <sup>2</sup>. Besides, he had some things he wanted to say to Ling Lan, so leaving now would be killing two birds with one stone.

And so, Ling Lan and Li Lanfeng left the Military Medical Research Centre together. After walking for a distance, Ling Lan halted abruptly. Lifting a brow, she turned to Li Lanfeng who had been trailing behind her all this while and asked, "Can I help you?"

Li Lanfeng smiled and nodded. Taking a step forward, he drew closer to Ling Lan, causing Ling Lan to frown slightly. This was because she did not like strangers to get too close to her, but Li Lanfeng's following words made her forget all of this.

"Luo Lang's injuries... have something to do with the Tianji incident, right?" Li Lanfeng said under his breath so only the two of them could hear.

Ling Lan shot a cool look at Li Lanfeng and asked in return, "The matter of Tianji... I heard their headquarters collapsed. The academy administration is investigating now; there's no official report yet. Pray tell how Senior Li came to this idea? Could it be that you have some insider information? Can you tell this Junior and clear my confusion?"

"Shi Mingyi has become a vegetable..." Li Lanfeng commented with a half-smile, "Other people may not know where his predilections lay, but I know very well. It's such a coincidence that Luo Lang's appearance is exactly the type that Shi Mingyi favours. I've also found out that Luo Lang had visited the Military Medical Research Centre once yesterday afternoon. But I asked Young Master Shiyu and he knew nothing of it."

Ling Lan's expression did not change at all at his words. As calm as usual, she replied, "Senior Li, baseless conjecture will only lead people to the wrong conclusion. If you want to know why Luo Lang went to the Military Medical Research Centre yesterday afternoon, I can give you an explanation."

Ling Lan paused for a beat then continued, "In fact, since the beginning of yesterday

afternoon, Luo Lang had felt something off about his body. So, after finishing the day's physical training courses, he hurried off to the Military Medical Research Centre, thinking to find Dux Li. However, our New Cadet Regiment suddenly received a mission from the administration of the military academy, and this mission was directly assigned by the upper ranks to Luo Lang by name. That's why we called Luo Lang to return, and this is also why Luo Lang had rushed back without seeing Dux Li."

On this end, Ling Lan was composedly spinning a believable tale for Li Lanfeng, while inside the mindspace, the flustered Little Four was hurriedly modifying information on the mainframe according to Ling Lan's words. Who'd have thought that even after she had wiped the slate so clean, this Li Lanfeng before her now had actually still managed to pick at a corner?

As expected of those within the military academy... this seemingly harmless, genial, gentleman-like Li Lanfeng actually possessed such formidable deductive abilities... quite frightening when he began to scheme. It was lucky that the other had not been more patient, coming to her immediately with just this bit of suspicion, thus giving her the chance to fill in all the gaps. Otherwise, if he had continued to investigate stealthily just like this, he might really find something incriminating. At that thought, Ling Lan could not help but feel some delayed fear, becoming rather apprehensive towards Li Lanfeng.

Once Little Four returned to confirm that he had settled everything, Ling Lan continued to say, "All of this should be recorded within the school mainframe. I believe that Senior Li has many talents in your camp, so you should be able to find the relevant records..."

Ling Lan's words made Li Lanfeng's heart clench — had he truly made a mistake?

Just as Li Lanfeng was wavering in shocked indecision, Ling Lan advised him with a half-smile, "That's why, Senior Li, we need to learn how to fully understand the truth first before coming to conclusions. Otherwise, it's very likely that we will bring unwanted trouble to ourselves and others. I believe Senior Li agrees with me, right?"

Ling Lan's words were vaguely threatening, but Li Lanfeng did not mind at all, instead smiling to say, "I was just afraid that this matter really had something to do with Junior Ling Lan and your friends. You all have just offended Leiting, and now if you all offend Tianji as well, life will really become very difficult for you all in the military academy. But since this matter has nothing to do with you juniors, then I can stop worrying."

Li Lanfeng's words made Ling Lan's brow furrow lightly — what was the intention of Li Lanfeng telling her all this? Was he really just being nice?

Li Lanfeng did not care what Ling Lan thought, directly bidding farewell to her. Before he departed, he left one last statement behind which could be taken as an expression of concern, or which may perhaps have some deeper meaning. He said, "Junior, your spiritual mutation is very powerful, but try to use as little of it as you can. You cannot be certain that there is no one else at this military academy with a spiritual mutation similar to yours... be careful in all things!"

That subtle smile Li Lanfeng directed at her before he left raised warning flags in Ling Lan's mind. What in the world had Li Lanfeng discovered? In her bewilderment, Ling Lan turned to Little Four to ask what he thought, but Little Four's answer only made Ling Lan even more confused.

Little Four said that this Li Lanfeng overall gave him a sense of familiarity, but Li Lanfeng was keeping everything under a tight lid. The slight trace of aura he exuded seemed like someone they knew, but it was also somewhat foreign as well... Little Four just could not tell who he was like right then; perhaps if they interacted with him a few more times, Little Four would be able to find something more useful...

Alright, since Little Four also had no good answers, Ling Lan could only push Li Lanfeng to the back of her mind for the moment. Besides, Li Lanfeng did not seem to have any bad intentions right now anyway, so Ling Lan decided not to waste too much effort thinking about him, because she now needed to begin working on the mission the New Cadet Regiment had accepted.

Although Luo Lang had returned to the Military Medical Research Centre to continue treatment, the selection of the honour guard to welcome the examiners still had to proceed. Ling Lan brought Wu Jiong and Xie Yi along, and they began selection activities among the New Cadet Regiment. Over the course of a few days, they finally rounded up a full team of members who fit the criteria the school administration wanted.

Subsequently, Ling Lan's team took charge of the training of this reception team. Those ceremonial tasks, such as lining up and welcoming procedures, were all handled by Wu Jiong, who was from a military elite family. Meanwhile, Ling Lan hung back till the end, where she then unleashed her horrifying force of presence upon them, letting these members accustom themselves to the feeling. Ling Lan believed that these



examiners would certainly consist of battle-hardened soldier kings, so they would definitely carry a thick air of killing intent about them. If the members of the reception team could not get used to this type of oppressive killing intent, then no matter how perfect their preparations in lining up and welcoming the others were, the moment the members met the examiners, they would still be scared spineless by them and become unable to move. That would be too disgraceful for their New Cadet Regiment.

Ling Lan's words received everyone's agreement. In particular, Wu Jiong was deeply moved... No wonder every time he saw his father or his grandfather, he would be so afraid that he found himself stilling in fright. One look was enough to almost send him slumping to the ground in fear. This was probably the endless killing intent they had cultivated from their experiences on the battlefield affecting his mind and spirit.

On Ling Lan's end, training for the reception was going on like a raging fire, while Luo Lang continued to endure the unbearably torturous treatment procedure under Li Shiyu. With regards to Luo Lang's return, Qi Long and Li Yingjie were filled with extreme schadenfreude.

Frankly, when Luo Lang had left this abyss of misery so early, getting away from the research centre, the two of them had been rather disgruntled. Think about it — they had all been injured within the same trench <sup>3</sup>, so what right did Luo Lang have to escape so quickly while they had to continue staying here and suffer? Of course their feelings would be imbalanced! Thus, when they found out that Luo Lang had returned, all their discontentment was cleared away.

It could only be said that these two were the absolute worst of good friends!

Another ten days went by, and Luo Lang finally recovered fully. Once again, he was discharged by Li Shiyu. Of course, before he was discharged this time, Li Shiyu ran countless examinations on him, even asking his instructor for a second opinion, because he was now extremely afraid that Ling Lan would continue extorting him.

However, in the eyes of Li Shiyu's instructor, this action was so commendable that he was touched. Look at this beloved disciple of his. How cautious and meticulous he was! As a military doctor, this was the correct attitude to have, being responsible for one's own patient till the very end... and so the instructors' satisfaction levels towards Li Shiyu once again reached an all-time high, which was an unexpected boon for Li Shiyu. Who knows how Li Shiyu would feel about this when he finds out? Should he hate Ling Lan or be grateful to her for creating such a beautiful misunderstanding?

Being discharged along with Luo Lang were Qi Long and Li Yingjie. Qi Long, in particular, had recovered astoundingly quickly. Although his injuries had been the worst among the three of them, his physical constitution was the best and his body's ability to absorb the medical agents was also very strong. Thus, the three of them coincidentally ended up recovering altogether to be discharged at the same time.

When the three of them stepped out of the Military Medical Research Centre, they were so moved that they instantly hid their faces and cried. D\*mmmit, they were finally free of that hell!

Even the typically upbeat and fearless Qi Long had been thoroughly traumatised by Li Shiyu's fearsome treatment methods, while Li Yingjie found fear growing within his heart. From this point on, he had an unshakeable psychological apprehension towards his cousin brother. In future, this would cause him to not dare to disobey Li Shiyu's orders at a critical moment... <sup>4</sup>

It had to be said that Li Shiyu had indeed achieved his objectives through this move. He had established a 'brotherly bond' with Li Yingjie, making them able to watch out for one another in the end. And though this bond was somewhat counter to his original imaginings, at the bottom of it, Li Yingjie would still listen to him now <sup>5</sup>.

# Chapter 288

## The Assessment Team!

The moment Luo Lang came out, he was whisked away by Wu Jiong to join the reception team. Initially, Luo Lang did not want to participate, but when he found out Boss Ling Lan was also part of the team, all his protestations died on his lips. Think about it. The boss was already doing it — how could the follower hide?

Not only that, Li Yingjie, who had just escaped the abyss of misery with him, was also snatched up by Ling Lan to join. Even though he really wanted to object, when Ling Lan swept a glacial stare upon him, Li Yingjie could only rub his nose and obediently accept his fate. Li Yingjie believed that Boss Ling Lan was still 100 times more brutal than his own second elder cousin brother.

Just like that, after training for approximately three days, it was finally their time to debut. Ling Lan led a bunch of handsome youths with stately physiques to the only main road connecting the military academy to the outside world. There, they arranged themselves into a long line, whereafter they stood tall and unmoving. Dressed in the white and blue ceremonial military uniforms specially designed by the school, these youths appeared extraordinarily heroic with maximum visual impact, a real treat for the eyes of any observers.

The administrators of the school who came to supervise were extremely satisfied by this. Of course, this was just the first step — whether these youths were just pretty on the surface, or were true gems, would still depend on their upcoming performance.

The assessment teams from the various army divisions arrived one after the other to the First Men's Military Academy. When they saw the reception team standing there in welcome, they were all startled. When had the First Men's Military Academy begun doing such a thing as well?

"Salute!" Ling Lan cried out, and all the members of the reception team lifted their heads and executed a cadet's salute almost simultaneously. The coordinated dance of their white gloves, along with their stern and serious faces, caused the initially indifferent attitudes of those from the assessment team to shift, becoming serious and proper in turn. They reflexively lifted their hands to return a salute, before solemnly

walking past the reception team towards the inner grounds of the school.

As every assessment team walked by the reception team, though their attitudes were extremely solemn, it could not be denied that there was a trace of approval in their eyes. It looked like the performance of the reception team had indeed pleased them.

Seeing this, the administrators of the school could not help but be secretly gleeful, certain that their decision back then was not wrong. These new cadets were surprisingly capable — doing things this way fully displayed the masculine force and daring of the First Men's Military Academy. Taking the members' handsome appearances and their youthful manners into consideration as well, even the most stubborn and bitter soldier could not help but find their mood lifted by such a sight.

All the assessment teams were to arrive over the course of three days. The teams included the 23 permanent army divisions and 10 or so other independent armies. It could not be considered a lot, but it was not very little either — every single assessment team that passed by was greeted by the reception team as if they were facing a great enemy, with all of their strength.

Perhaps the military academy's pretty boy strategy had succeeded, for after the assessment teams arrived at the school, their attitudes did indeed seem much better than before during the previous years. This made the administrators of the school let out a great sigh of relief — it looked like they had done the right thing.

Ling Lan snorted derisively at how the military academy relaxed just like that. She did not believe that the assessment teams would show any mercy just because they now had a good impression of the school. When it was necessary to be ruthless, they definitely would not falter and show mercy. This was the base nature of a competent soldier. It could only be said that the school administrators had been away from the army for too long — they had already forgotten some things.

However, Ling Lan would not go remind these administrators — after all, the cadets just needed to complete the task set by the military academy and that would be enough. As for the final outcome, that had nothing to do with the new cadets at all; Ling Lan was perfectly happy to be a carefree bystander.

However, Ling Lan's composure only lasted for the first two days. On the third day, when the representatives of the 23rd Division appeared, Ling Lan's composed face finally faltered.

The 23rd Division was one of the new permanent army divisions of the Federation. When it had appeared on the name list of assessment teams, it had drawn the collective attention of all the instructors at the academy. Of course, it being the division of her own dad, no matter how cool Ling Lan acted, she could not help but speculate who her dad had sent to take charge of the assessment this time. She naturally wished that a fair and unbiased team leader would be sent so that the 23rd Division could leave an excellent impression with the First Men's Military Academy.

However, when she saw one man stepping down from the special train from the spaceport, her initially unmoved ice-block face finally cracked, giving a violent twitch.

That man who was intentionally pulling his army cap down with a large face-mask covering half his face... even though he was dressed in a major general uniform, pretending to be aloof, how could this familiar presence fool her eyes?

Ling Lan clenched her teeth internally. *'Bloody hell, why is my idiot dad here?! What in the world is he planning?'*

*"Ah, it's daddy...!!"* In the mindspace, Little Four's eyes were spilling over with red hearts, squealing joyfully as he stared at Ling Xiao fanatically. He was instantly sent flying with a kick from Ling Lan. *"You bloody keep quiet!"*

*"Boo hoo hoo, Boss, I haven't seen daddy in so long. Why aren't we saying hi to daddy?"* Little Four quickly scrambled back, crying as he hugged Ling Lan's leg, strongly requesting to go reunite with their daddy.

*"It's obvious from a glance that this idiot dad is here undercover. How can I go greet him?"* Ling Lan stared speechlessly at that man who thought he was disguised so well, really unsure what she could say anymore.

Luckily, the people by his side were intentionally blocking off the others' line of sight, and Ling Xiao himself was keeping a low profile, so his identity was not exposed.

When the 23rd Division assessment team passed before Ling Lan, Ling Xiao abruptly stopped. His eyes, the only part of him exposed, were clearly smiling as he asked, "Both stance and ceremony are pretty good. Are you all freshmen?"

*Was he intentionally making conversation?* Ling Lan mentally rolled her eyes dramatically at her dad, but as composed as usual on the surface, she saluted and replied, "Yes, Sir."

Ling Xiao turned to look at the accompanying administrators beside Ling Lan and said with a laugh, "Not bad! Having such flair even as freshmen. It looks like the First Men's Military Academy lives up to its name!" Ling Xiao's intention was absolutely to praise his own daughter, nothing at all to do with the First Men's Military Academy.

However, the administrators registered his words differently. Almost everyone felt that this was the representative of the 23rd Division expressing appreciation for the military academy, and this instantly injected joy onto their faces. It was wonderful! But of course they still acted humble on the surface, repeatedly saying 'not at all, not at all'.

Mind you, even though the previous other divisions had reacted favourably towards the welcoming team, they had not said anything outright, maintaining the unassailable dignity of an army division all the way. It was unexpected that the leader of the 23rd Division's team was so friendly — this made the 23rd Division's impression rise by several notches more in the administrators' eyes.

At the same time, they were awed at how General Ling Xiao was truly General Ling Xiao — even a subordinate of his was so nice, causing others to feel as if visited by a balmy spring breeze. They began to plan — since the 23rd Division thought so well of the First Men's Military Academy, could it be that they would take in more cadets from the school this time? At that thought, the administrators' hearts heated up with excitement. They all prepared to return and pass on the word to all the instructors, telling them to encourage the students to apply for enlistment to the 23rd Division as much as possible...

This fondness the administrators had for the 23rd Division would continue on indefinitely after this. In future, every year, they would not forget to remind the instructors to encourage their students to choose enlistment with the 23rd Division as much as they could...

This was Ling Xiao's personal charisma — he would always breed a favourable impression in others' hearts, and they would then choose to follow him without even knowing it!

*"Wowowowow, Daddy's awesome!"* Witnessing this scene, Little Four once again turned into a crazed fan, staring adoringly at Ling Xiao with his face cupped in his hands. At this moment, Little Four looked nothing like an intelligence entity <sup>1</sup>.

Ling Lan stared up at the sky, speechless. She just knew that whenever Little Four met Ling Xiao, his systems would shut down and his higher functions would stop working. It looked like if she wanted to preserve Little Four's reliability, she would need to keep him away from Ling Xiao.

"This youth is pretty good. While we're here at the military academy, is it possible to ask this student to accompany us and take us around the school, so that we can better understand things?" Ling Xiao requested from the administrators smilingly as he pointed at Ling Lan. The administrators naturally clamoured to agree — didn't this mean that the 23rd Division's interest in the school was that much greater? This was a good thing! They must support this!

This move of Ling Xiao's instantly threw Ling Lan's plans out the window <sup>2</sup>, causing Ling Lan to silently gnash her teeth. It looked like Little Four would be unable to help her for a long time after this.

Just like that, within the First Men's Military Academy, the first meeting between the Ling Xiao and Ling Lan father-daughter pair went by so unremarkably without drawing anyone's attention...

Oh, no, well that was not quite true. After the representative of the 23rd Division assessment team had walked a distance away, Luo Lang, who had been standing right beside Ling Lan, asked her softly with a face filled with confusion, "Boss Lan, you know that person?"

Ling Lan quirked a brow, answering with just a look, as if asking why Luo Lang was asking this question.

"I felt your aura become a little unsteady earlier..." said Luo Lang uncertainly. Ever since subduing all his secondary personalities, Luo Lang's sixth sense had become extremely sensitive. He was now able to pick up the emotions of those he cared about, like how Ling Lan had obviously felt a little troubled earlier.

"Tell you when we get back," Ling Lan replied lowly. Since her dad was here, she believed that her old man absolutely would not leave quietly without a trace — he would definitely cause some trouble. Moreover, she too wanted to let her dad meet these companions by her side. She wanted to tell her father that these companions were her most treasured brothers and that she hoped Ling Xiao would value them highly as well.

At this time, Ling Lan still had not realised that her current actions were just like that of a child on the cusp of growing up seeking a parent's approval.

Luo Lang nodded his head at her reply and said nothing more. This was because the welcoming ceremony had not ended yet — there were still a few more assessment teams from both the divisions and the independent armies about to arrive.

Three days were enough to make even these youths with excellent physical constitutions feel thoroughly wrung out. When the administrators finally declared the end of their task, the youths all cheered wildly, extremely grateful that they had finally left this abyss of misery behind.

Truth be told, even though the whole thing seemed to only be a few simple movements — standing at attention, lining up, and saluting — the mental pressure the youths were under belied their casual demeanours. These soldiers who were here for the assessment were all battle-hardened soldier kings from various battlefields — an oppressive cloud of killing intent hung around them, constantly challenging the psychological resilience of these youths at every turn.

Facing these strong and formidable examiner-soldiers, the youths had been able to perform their duties so perfectly, composed and assured, unusually calm and undisturbed, all because of Ling Lan's daily bombardment with her own aura. This allowed the youths to become used to this type of killing intent within the shortest period of time possible.

In the end, they had persevered and completed their mission flawlessly. At the same time, they had also left an extremely favourable impression with those assessment team representatives. This established solid foundations for their future development — no matter which army division they went to, as long as they mentioned being part of this year's reception team, those officers would view them with different eyes. It went without question that their future development would definitely not be too bad.



## Chapter 289

### Missing His Son?

It was worth mentioning that those excellent youths had still been frightened badly by that major general of the 23rd Division. The moment the other had appeared, they had sensed the horrifying force of presence emanating from that major general's body. It was almost enough to crumble their composure instantly. If the other had not stopped to speak with Ling Lan, thus dissipating this pressure, they might not have been able to hold up for long.

This also made them secretly admire the 23rd Division even more... as expected of General Ling Xiao's man — compared to the other divisions, the 23rd Division's representative was clearly much more impressive. This caused these youths to revere the 23rd Division greatly — 4 years later <sup>1</sup>, quite a number of students would choose the 23rd Division as their enlistment goal.

This was certainly a beautiful misunderstanding. Just think — if the full force of Ling Lan's presence at optimal peak of Qi-Jin was unleashed, it would naturally exceed the pressure exerted by a regular officer. Besides that, the visiting officers were afraid to put too much pressure on the students, so they had all tamped down on their force of presence. Thus, these students had the false impression that the 23rd Division was much stronger compared to the other teams.

Furthermore, Ling Xiao was a god-class operator. Even if he was fully suppressing his presence, when the gap between the realms of two parties was too wide, mere proximity would be enough for the weaker party to feel a tremendous pressure. This was also why those students had felt the pressure so keenly. However, when Ling Xiao had spoken with his daughter, his mood had become joyful, which had subconsciously relaxed his defensive aura, thus reducing that pressure by a significant amount. In fact, it was precisely this kind of moment that would be a prime opportunity to assassinate Ling Xiao. It had to be said that Ling Xiao's only two weaknesses were Lan Luofeng and Ling Lan.

Thus, it wasn't that those other representatives were not strong — the father-daughter duo of Ling Xiao and Ling Lan were just *too* strong, which was why such a

wondrous misunderstanding was created.

After bidding farewell to the other team members, Ling Lan led Luo Lang back to their villa. Before Ling Lan could tell Luo Lang the truth, however, Ling Lan received a notification from the school administrators. The message said that there were representatives from the 23rd Division on their way to her villa for a tour.

At the end of the message, the administrators did not forget to remind Ling Lan to try and find chances to extol the virtues of the school. If the academy did well, then everyone would be even better off.

Ling Lan hung up the call with a frigid expression on her face, while the news made Han Jijyun and the others exchange looks. The assessment teams had nothing to do with them freshmen... so why did this person from the 23rd Division want to come find them? Right then, they were a little blind, having forgotten for the moment that the commander of the 23rd Division was Ling Lan's dad, Ling Xiao.

Alright, since Ling Lan had never spoken much about Ling Xiao in front of them, as time went by, they had almost completely neglected the fact that Ling Xiao was Ling Lan's father. This was a classic example of missing something in plain sight. It could only be said that, in their minds, Ling Lan was formidable enough in her own right to make them forget about Ling Xiao's existence.

*"Hells, what other tricks is that idiot father planning?"* A grumpy Ling Lan could only wait in the living room for her dad to arrive, her expression frosty.

Seeing Boss Lan shrouded in cold air, everyone knew that Ling Lan was in a bad mood. By now, Luo Lang could already confirm that his boss most definitely knew that major general back there.

Among those coming to the villa, other than the representative from the school administration, there were only 3 people from the 23rd Division. The leader was Ling Xiao, while the other two trailed behind him silently. When Ling Xiao stepped into the hall of the villa, the other two men automatically chose two strategic positions and planted themselves there.

Seeing this, Ling Lan knew that these two must be her dad's personal bodyguards because of the positions they had chosen. One was at the window — the range of sight at the window was vast, allowing him to have a firm grasp of the situation outside.

Meanwhile, the other was standing at a position that would be almost overlooked by all the people in the hall, but where all the people would be clearly captured by his gaze. In other words, any strange movements by the people within the hall would be seen by him. One obvious, one unassuming; one outward-facing, one internal — their cooperation was impeccable.

Ling Xiao nodded at Ling Lan's group of six with a smile. Under the administrator's arrangement, he sat on a sofa in the hall and began chatting amicably with Ling Lan's group, getting a rough idea of their situation. Then, he conversed for a bit with the administrator, and finally, by his request, the representative from the administration had no choice but to leave reluctantly. Of course, when he left, the administrator did not forget to throw a pointed glance in Ling Lan's direction.

Once the administrator was gone, there was only Ling Lan's team left in the villa and Ling Xiao's group of three. Only then did Ling Xiao drop his scholarly gentleman demeanour, shaking out his arms as he leaned back into the sofa and grumbled, "Speaking with them, is really so tiring!"

The way he was behaving, loose and relaxed like he was in his own home, made the corners of the eyes of his two bodyguards twitch subtly. In their minds, they were probably howling: *Sir, please maintain some bit of the decorum and dignity a general should have!*

Of course, this behaviour also made Qi Long and the others stare at one another, uncertain what they should do. If this were a proper conversation, they might still know what they could say, but this type of situation was beyond their expectations, so they really had no clue how to react anymore.

Unanimously, they all turned to look at their boss Ling Lan. Ling Lan had his arms folded across his chest as he stared coldly at the other... alright, Boss was definitely in a bad mood. They had better keep their distance.

Surreptitiously, Han Jijyun, Xie Yi, and Lin Zhong-qing retreated several steps back in unison. Han Jijyun was a staunch brother, not forgetting to tug on Qi Long's arm to alert this rather insensitive fellow.

Qi Long stared in confusion as the three put some distance between themselves and Boss Lan, but then he checked his boss's aura... fine, he may be a bit insensitive, but his animal instinct let him understand that Han Jijyun and the others were acting

appropriately. And so, he followed suit instantly to retreat, and holding true to the ideology of helping a comrade who had suffered with him before, he did not forget to alert Luo Lang while he was at it.

Just like this, Luo Lang also realised the danger and retreated silently. These actions only took several seconds to complete — if one was not paying attention, the five of them would seem to have dashed back at about the same time.

Perhaps the cold air around Ling Lan was rather aggressive — it took a while, but Ling Xiao finally discovered that his daughter did not seem to welcome his arrival. He quickly stood up and said with an awkward smile, "Cadet, has our visit troubled you?"

"What do you think? Sir Major General?" responded Ling Lan coolly. She could already predict that her initially peaceful and tranquil cadet life, would definitely be destroyed by her old man... (Truth be told, Ling Lan's cadet life had never been tranquil from the start... could this be considered Ling Lan wilfully trumping up a charge to condemn Ling Xiao?) <sup>2</sup>

Ling Lan's retort caused Lin Zhong-qing and Xie Yi to suck in a cold breath. Was it really okay to use this kind of hostile attitude when interacting with a major general from the 23rd Division?

Only Han Jijun seemed to have an inkling spark through his mind, but it went by so quickly that he could not grab hold of it. This made him crinkle his brow and descend into thought.

Those two bodyguards of Ling Xiao also frowned at the same time — Ling Lan's manner made them extremely angry. As Ling Xiao's personal bodyguards, they would not permit anyone to show any disrespect to their senior officer, especially since this senior officer was also the one they revered the most.

The only one who was still as cheerful as ever was Ling Xiao; he did not mind Ling Lan's attitude in the least. In short, no matter what expression or motions his daughter did, in this father's eyes, they were all perfect and wonderful... *See, this is my daughter! Her proud bones would absolutely never break just from a show of greater power! As expected of a progeny of mine, Ling Xiao's!* In the eyes of this twenty-four filial exemplars dad, his own child was absolutely faultless. If by any chance there was any fault, then it still must be the fault of other people.

Thus, an internally gleeful Ling Xiao walked towards Ling Lan, all smiles as he opened his arms wide and said, "In short, for this duration of time at the academy, I'll be troubling you." Ling Xiao moved forwards, planning to use a passionate hug to convey how proud he was right now, as well as give an outlet for his full berth of fatherly love.

This passionate action of Ling Xiao's made the complexions of Ling Lan's team of five pale. Having already retreated a distance away previously, they once again took several steps back right now in unison, putting even more distance between them and Ling Lan.

They knew very well that their boss really hated any physical contact with strangers. Even with them, unless absolutely necessary, he would not come close and touch them, much less this type of passionate embrace.

Han Jijyun could not help but peek at Boss Lan who was emitting a steady flow of cold air, standing stiffly right ahead of them. He hoped his boss would be able to just tolerate this hug this time — after all, the other was a major general of the 23rd Division. If they offended the other...

Wait, something was not right. Wasn't the 23rd Division Ling Lan's father's division? Han Jijyun's brain finally seemed to figure something out. He turned his head to stare gobsmacked at that obviously affectionate major general, and a notion sparked through his mind...

Reality proved that Ling Lan would not resign herself to things she disliked. She abruptly raised a fist and ploughed it straight into the offending person's abdomen.

A 'bam' and Ling Lan sent her dad reeling back into the sofa with one punch. This extremely blatant attack made the two men by Ling Xiao's side blanch dramatically — they had planned to intercept the attack, but they had been frozen in place by a tremendous force of presence at that instant.

Bewildered, they stared at their senior officer, not even daring to struggle. This was because they were well aware who was the source of this force of presence — it was precisely their leader General Ling Xiao.

Looking at Ling Xiao playing up how pitiful he was by laying on the sofa cradling his stomach with a pained expression, Ling Lan blew on her own fists lightly and then asked coldly, "What are you doing here?"

"I missed you," said Ling Xiao, his gaze sad and pleading. Despite appearances, he was actually extremely glad in his heart, because this behaviour of Ling Lan's proved that his daughter had already recognised him even with his disguise. As expected of his daughter — what keen and discerning eyes<sup>3</sup>, able to see the truth with just one glance.

"You actually abandoned the 23rd Division so irresponsibly to come here? Is that how a commander should act?" Ling Lan's ice-block face finally cracked as she bellowed in a deep voice.

Why had she thought that Ling Xiao was a responsible and good man worthy of trust? Sure enough, the idealised image in her heart was having a serious mismatch with reality. Ling Lan felt that she had been duped.

This bellow stupefied Qi Long and the others. They stared in shock at that major general sitting on the sofa cradling his stomach, his eyes the only thing exposed on his face. So he was the gentle-mannered and refreshing-like-a-spring-breeze national idol, General Ling Xiao?

Only Han Jijyun let out a soft sigh, thinking, *'So it is him!'*

"I missed my son, so what's wrong with coming to visit him?" Since his charade had been exposed by his daughter, Ling Xiao no longer tried to pretend. He sat up properly on the sofa and tugged down that rather stifling mask, declaring why he had come with bold righteousness.

# Chapter 290

## Ling Xiao's Wish!

Beneath the mask was, as expected, that handsome face which the entire Federation was crazy about. On it, was Ling Xiao's trademark smile, still as likeable and respectable as ever.

Ling Xiao's words made his two bodyguards stare in shock at Ling Lan. Although they had always known General Ling Xiao had a child, they had not known the particulars, much less that he was studying at the First Men's Military Academy. No wonder the general had randomly decided to come here this time — he was probably here to see his child.

Realisation flashed through the two bodyguards' eyes, and they turned unanimously to stare somewhere else, showing that they were unconcerned with their senior officer's private matters. But clearly, their ears were perked up high — deep inside, they were still very curious about how General Ling Xiao interacted with his son...

These straightforward words of Ling Xiao, filled with fatherly love, left Ling Lan somewhat uncertain on how to react. Mind you, when they had first met, Ling Xiao's demeanour had been extremely reserved. It should be said that, having been absent for the 16 years of Ling Lan's life when she had been growing up, Ling Xiao was completely clueless about how he should express his fatherly love... Equally flustered, both Ling Lan and Ling Xiao had been trying to adapt to their new roles, trying to accept each other's existence.

Unexpectedly, after this time apart, seeing Ling Xiao again, her father had actually changed his original warm but reserved manner completely, becoming extremely aggressive in his approach, all 'I am your father so you must accept me'...but this type of Ling Xiao was something Ling Lan was not ready for, so she actually did not know what to do anymore.

She couldn't very well say coyly back that she did not need her dad to miss her... right, this type of flirtatious conversation was really inappropriate between them. Therefore, Ling Lan could only react with silence!

"You've been gone for so long, we all miss you a lot. Also, your mum has been worried these days whether you're adapting well to life in the military academy, so when she found out about this opportunity, she asked me to come and see." Ling Xiao saw Ling Lan staying silent and felt that something was up, so after once more expressing how much he had missed his daughter, he decisively pushed the blame <sup>1</sup> onto his wife. Before outsiders, ahem ahem, he still had to maintain his dignity as a general somehow.

Ling Lan peered coldly at him, then replied evenly, "Tell mum that I'm fine on all fronts here. And also, if you are missing your son, I recommend, father, that you go back and discuss things over with mum. Based on the current situation, the both of you could just birth another one. At that time, you won't have the free time for your mind to stray anymore."

"Er... that's a matter for later." Ling Xiao could only chuckle awkwardly at this reply of Ling Lan's which gave him no face, but he did not dare to say anything in return. Who asked him to owe his own daughter so much as a dad?

The fact remained that it was all his fault — putting aside his disappearance for 16 years, why did he have to make such a huge blunder right after he returned? Actually sending his own daughter right into the great wolves' den of the First Men's Military Academy... every time he thought of this, Ling Xiao could not help but stamp his feet and pound his chest, unbelievably frustrated and annoyed.

Although Ling Xiao had received a blow from Ling Lan, his extraordinarily strong heart was completely fine. He continued to carry out his plan with determination. Yes, before he had to leave the military academy, he intended to capture the heart of his daughter and let her call him 'daddy' with full sincerity, not this cold and emotionless address she was using now. Just imagining his daughter coyly and adorably calling him 'daddy', he felt ardour and zeal coursing through his blood.

Right then, Ling Xiao had conveniently ignored reality — would Ling Lan, with her typically cold-domineering-unruly swag, really morph into a delicate and cute persona and address someone coyly? Clearly, Ling Xiao's imaginings would absolutely never become reality...

Before Ling Lan, even Ling Xiao had to back off sometimes — his initially warm smile filled with boundless sunshine even seemed a little awkward now — but it was precisely this conciliatory and compromising display of fatherly love which caused a



multitude of feelings to well up in the hearts of Qi Long and the others. Some of them were even looking at their boss with admiration and reverence — as expected of their Boss Lan, even in the face of General Ling Xiao, he could be so collected and domineering...

Relating the relationship between Ling Xiao and Ling Lan to their relationships with their own fathers, all of them felt like crying. Why was Boss Lan's father, General Ling Xiao, so good-tempered, so warm and nice, and so tolerant? When they thought about their own dads back home with angry slanted brows and full of criticism, they began to wonder whether they had been wild children randomly picked up from somewhere... <sup>2</sup>

It had to be said that Ling Xiao's method of expressing his fatherly love had hurt the souls of these children.

As a result, after reflecting on this pain, Ling Lan's band of little companions all decided that when they returned home, they would raise their flags and fight for independence, beginning their prolonged revolutionary life. This would also cause their fathers to stab knives at Ling Xiao's image in the dark depths of the night when no one else was around...

Against this move of Ling Xiao's, even the composed Ling Lan was helpless and relented. How could Ling Lan have known that this national idol, this supreme elite of the Federation, would actually be this thick-skinned? Ling Lan, who had always not been good at expressing herself, could only rub her nose at this time, keeping her silence once again. She couldn't very well heartlessly chase away her dad who had travelled all this way to visit her!

At the heart of it, this behaviour of Ling Xiao's had still moved Ling Lan considerably — right then, she truly felt like she was a wild and unruly daughter being spoilt and pampered by her father.

Who was Ling Xiao? He immediately sensed the softening of his daughter's heart and was instantly overjoyed, convinced that he had done the right thing.

Honestly, regarding how Ling Lan had always been unwilling to accept him as her daddy, Ling Xiao had been very anxious despite feeling resigned to it. After saying goodbye to Ling Lan previously, he had constantly been thinking how he could resolve this distance between Ling Lan and him.

Ling Xiao had never been a father before — so suddenly having a daughter emerge out of nowhere made him exceedingly flustered, unsure how to communicate with her. Although Ling Xiao did not know what to do, he was someone who was willing to learn. Thus, even while he was working on establishing the 23rd Division, he had not forgotten to purchase lots of reading materials about parent and child relationships from the virtual network. Outside work, whenever he had the free time, he would hide away in his study and pore over these books diligently, trying hard to seek a solution to his problem...

After reading through countless books, he finally felt it was time to progress to the next stage. Thus, he had decisively grabbed the chance to come down here to the military academy and rushed over excitedly, prepared to sweep away this issue that had been plaguing him for so long in one concerted attempt. In short, he would definitely become the most perfect daddy in his daughter's eyes.

Therefore, the moment they met, he had followed the instructions of the books: *Fatherly love should not be hidden. It must be explicitly expressed, otherwise your child will not feel it and think you do not love him... Only by letting your child feel your love will he accept you, and only then can you establish a close relationship with your child...*

Of course, when Ling Xiao read those books, he was absolutely ignoring that line of extremely small print at the bottom of the covers: *This book is only suitable for use on babies aged 0-3.*

Ling Xiao felt as if he had gained something, which made him even more convinced of the efficacy of the books' guidance. All smiles, he looked towards the few youths standing behind Ling Lan and said kindly, "You all must be Ling Lan's good friends. It's a pleasure meeting you all for the first time. And also, thank you all for taking care of Ling Lan all this while."

Ling Xiao's friendly manner flustered Qi Long and the others. Overwhelmed by this unexpected show of favour, they quickly replied, "Not at all, G-general Ling..." Fine, having gotten used to the stern authoritative image of their own fathers, Ling Xiao's attitude of treating them like equals was undoubtedly a shock to them.

Of course, at the same time, their expressions were dreamy. Even though they had long known that Ling Xiao was Ling Lan's father, they had never met him before. In their minds, Ling Xiao was still that national idol far away out of reach, their lifelong goal in their studies. And now, they had finally encountered their idol in the flesh in such close

quarters.

"You all are my son Ling Lan's good friends. Just call me Uncle Ling," said Ling Xiao with a wide smile. When Ling Lan heard this, the frost on her face thawed a little.

Ling Xiao yelled a great big YES in his heart — sure enough, to be a qualified dad, one must treat the little companions who played with one's child with a good attitude. This would make the child feel that they were respected, and they would just love you more and become even closer with you.

"Yes, Un-uncle Ling!" They looked at that face of Ling Xiao's which was so youthful it could almost pass off as their own elder brother's, and once more compared it to the grizzled faces of their dads adorned with white sideburns, and were instantly tearing up inside. This cry of 'uncle' was truly quite difficult for them. But they were well aware that these words of Ling Xiao meant that he had acknowledged them, accepting them as Ling Lan's confidants.

Watching Ling Xiao conversing with Qi Long and the others with full sincerity, his attitude warm and an easy smile on his face, Ling Lan stared up into the sky, utterly speechless.

Ling Lan knew her dad's charisma was boundless, but this was truly too much. With just a simple exchange of words, he had completely taken Qi Long and the other four in under his spell. Seeing their faces filled with idolisation and adoration, Qi Long and the others might have already forgotten that they still had their boss by their side. This made Ling Lan feel a little wistful — as expected, she was still no match for her dad...

Even more frightening was the fact that, in the mindspace, Little Four had been screaming his adoration non-stop ever since Ling Xiao had arrived. He was making so much noise that her head hurt. Not only that, he was even complaining that Ling Lan was not giving him a chance to talk with Ling Xiao. His various antics expressing his gloom and sadness almost made Ling Lan resort to domestic violence once more. Luckily for Little Four, after being tempered by Instructor Number Five's countless perverse training torments, Ling Lan still managed to restrain herself before she went berserk.

Still, right after, Little Four was heartlessly thrown by Ling Lan into a small dark room, and the world was instantly peaceful and quiet again. Ling Lan felt refreshed and at ease down to her very soul.

However, Ling Lan's good mood soon turned sour again. This was because she could hear Qi Long and the others telling Ling Xiao everything that had happened ever since they had entered the military academy without any reservations. They told him how they had been pressed by the seniors since joining the school, forced to accept a wagered fight with Leiting, and how three members of the New Cadet Regiment had been injured heavily in the subsequent arena, requiring Boss Lan to use his mighty fist to settle the issue, etcetera etcetera...

Fine, telling him all this, so be it. But unexpectedly, that brat Luo Lang actually told Ling Xiao all about the incident with Tianji with a grieved expression on his face. When Ling Xiao heard that there were actually evil and manipulative students within the school that liked the same gender <sup>3</sup>, his initially warm and genial smile finally cracked...

With a 'boom', the livid Ling Xiao slapped a powerful palm down onto the only tea table <sup>4</sup> in the living room of Ling Lan's villa, pulverizing it into dust.

"Bastard, how dare he!" Ling Xiao roared. His force of presence whipped free for an instant, and all the lights in the hall shattered with consecutive pops, plunging the entire villa into darkness.

Apparently, his daughter, who was as lovely as flowers and jade, was still in so much danger even though she was disguised as a boy...

# Chapter 291

## Not Wronged!

Staring out into the pitch blackness before her, Ling Lan could no longer keep calm. Through gritted teeth, she said, "Dear father, are you planning to demolish our living quarters? And then let us sleep on the streets?"

Ling Xiao's anger which had been about to explode deflated rapidly under this question of Ling Lan's, scattering to the winds. The entire hall was eerily silent for a few seconds, and then Ling Xiao could be heard to say carefully, "This... I really could not control it. I'm sorry, son, I'll take care next time."

*Next time? There would still be a next time?* Ling Lan felt her head start to ache. She had known that her dad coming here would definitely not be calm and peaceful, but it still should not be to the extent of breaking her house down, right?

In a very bad mood, Ling Lan's entire body was giving out endless cold air, dropping the temperature of the room instantly by several degrees, making the others in the room shiver involuntarily in the dark.

Ling Xiao naturally knew that this was a sign that his daughter was truly enraged now, and so he could only ask hesitantly, "Then, this... what should we do?"

"What to do? Of course we'll need to fix it? And also, father, do you expect me to fix it personally?" Ling Lan stretched out a porcelain hand with a cold expression, waving it in front of her dad's face.

Ling Xiao naturally could not bear for his beloved daughter to do this kind of rough work, and so he said quickly, "I'll fix it, I'll fix it..." Taking care of one's daughter was the solemn duty of a dad, not to mention that this accident was his fault anyway — he could not shirk the responsibility.

"Sir, let us handle it," His bodyguards quickly stepped up to volunteer. If they let General Ling Xiao do such menial things himself, they could forget going back and just kill themselves here and now for the crime of doing so.

"Uh... then I'll leave this to you both. Thank you for the trouble." Ling Xiao knew that if he insisted on doing it himself, these two bodyguards would definitely disembowel themselves and use their deaths to pay for the 'crime'. In order to save two lives, he could only let them help him.

"We'll help too." Although the two men who had volunteered were bodyguards, the insignia on their shoulders clearly marked them as majors. How could Qi Long and the others just sit around and watch the two majors repair their things? They quickly leapt up to lend a hand.

In the face of the students' eagerness, the two bodyguards naturally would not refuse. Just like that, the few of them begun to clean up the mess Ling Xiao had made. In fact, the villa had its own self-automated sweeper and cleaning device, but unfortunately, Ling Xiao's burst of power had also destroyed those things as well. Thus, the group could only do things manually unless they sought out someone from the administration to come solve this, but that would be even more troublesome.

Once everyone had begun busying themselves with their respective tasks, all of them leaving the hall, Ling Xiao turned to look at Ling Lan and said, "Do you want me to do anything? Son?" Even though Ling Xiao really wanted to call his child 'darling daughter', as level-headed and rational as he was, he would never commit such a base mistake and bring possible trouble to his daughter.

"What can you do?" asked Ling Lan with a quirked brow.

"They'll probably apply for enlistment, right? Even if I cannot influence the other divisions, for the 23rd Division at least, I have the ability to refuse them," said Ling Xiao with a smile on the corners of his lips, still appearing as kindly and gentlemanly as ever. It was as if what he was saying had not one whit of personal motive leading to his abuse of power.

Ling Lan decisively shook her head and said, "No need!"

"Why?" Ling Xiao was shocked by her response. He was sure his daughter must be angry at those who bullied her, and he truly wanted to help his daughter vent some of her anger.

"This is between us students. There is no need to escalate things!" said Ling Lan evenly, "Besides, even if they managed to qualify for the 23rd Division and become my rivals

in the future, I'm not afraid of them now, and I won't be afraid of them in future either." Ling Lan stated all this with conviction, the confidence on her brow moving Ling Xiao greatly. Boo hoo hoo, my daughter is just too amazing, she is just too aspirational...

Inside Ling Xiao's mental landscape, his Twenty-four Filial Exemplars dad mode was officially activated. He was all kinds of emotional inside, weeping freely and copiously. However, on the surface, he was as composed as usual. After a brief silence, he nodded and said, "That's how my son should be like. If they really apply for enlistment to the 23rd Division and pass, I'll take them all in, and as for the grudge between you and them..." Ling Xiao's eyes gleamed brightly, "I'll let you handle it personally."

As if not sensing the sudden spike in the pressure coming from Ling Xiao's body, Ling Lan continued to stand tall and replied steadily, "What I have said, I will do."

Ling Lan's behaviour made Ling Xiao both proud and sad at the same time. He was proud that his daughter was so independent and strong, but also sad over all the hardship his daughter had had to suffer to support the entire Ling family for these past 16 years. If he had not disappeared for those whole 16 years, how could Ling Lan have turned out like this? Believing that she had to handle everything herself?

At this thought, Ling Xiao was filled with regret. In a low voice, he said, "I'm sorry, these past years have been hard on you."

What these words were referring to, both Ling Xiao and Ling Lan understood very well without needing any further explanation. Ling Lan's heart throbbed, a complicated emotion stealing over her heart. For a moment, she did not know what to say, and the silence stretched out between father and daughter.

Finally, Ling Lan raised her jaw and replied proudly, "I do not feel wronged. I feel that, this shall be one of the most colourful parts of my life. I am glad that I could experience all of that."

Yes, if she had not impersonated a man, would she have made friends with this bunch of steadfast companions and become their boss, working hard and growing up together? At most, she would only have been able to become a girl much like Luo Chao or Han Xuya <sup>1</sup>, chatting about the things girls liked to chat about, fantasizing what their future husbands would look like <sup>2</sup>... but was that sort of life really what she wanted?

Ling Lan mentally shook her head. She had already gotten used to her current thrilling rollercoaster life with its dramatic ups and downs — a tranquil life would probably feel strange to her now. At the very least, she just could not imagine becoming that kind of sweet and delicate girl like Luo Chao — becoming a tomboy like Han Xuya was perhaps a more likely possibility. At this thought, she began to miss those two girls, wondering how they were doing at the Federal Co-ed Military Starship Navigation Academy...

"Alright, Ling Lan, You must remember what you've said today. I, Ling Xiao, am proud of you." A trace of emotion brushed across Ling Xiao's eyes. With a daughter like this, how fortunate was he? If he could, he would laugh wildly up into the skies, to better express the full swell of his happiness.

"Father, I will not disappoint you." Ling Lan reeled back her nostalgic thoughts, speaking to Ling Xiao with a serious expression.

Ling Xiao nodded in satisfaction, but his heart was weeping, *'Daughter, if you switch that 'father' into 'daddy', I'll be even happier... '*

Right at that moment, the villa's hall was abruptly lit up. It turned out that Qi Long and the others had finished repairing a small part of the light sources. The greatest contributor was Lin Zhong-qing — he lived up to his role as the team's logistician, repairing all those devices at soonest notice. After that, under the intense repair work of these reactivated devices over the course of 10 minutes in the dark, Ling Lan's entire villa was once again restored to the light. Of course, not everything was as good as it had been previously, but at the very least, the lights were back on, and that was a good thing.

Seeing this, Ling Lan felt that she could not keep her dad, this king of destruction, here any longer in order to save her villa from further catastrophe, so she said, "Father, the assessments begin tomorrow. You had better go back earlier and rest."

Ling Xiao was touched. His daughter was really too considerate, fearing that he would become tired... in any case, he would not admit that his daughter was sick of him and wanted him out of her house.

Though he was touched, Ling Xiao could not bear leaving his daughter so quickly. He was just about to say that he was not at all tired when Ling Lan suddenly lifted a brow and sent an icy look straight at her father, saying, "Don't you think so too, my father?"



In particular, the two words 'my father' was greatly emphasised, pretty much squeezed out from between clenched teeth.

Those phoenix eyes filled with an air of desolation, the subtle warning in her words, that demeanour and tone, was exactly alike when Lan Luofeng was warning him.

And so, Ling Xiao succumbed to tragedy, because he just godd\*mn had no resistance at all to this kind of tone and demeanour...

In the end, Ling Xiao could only leave Ling Lan's villa with a bellyful of resentment and reluctance. Of course, when he left, he did not forget to remind his daughter to report to the assessment point bright and early tomorrow. For a week from now, all of Ling Lan's time had been claimed by this shameless dad, Ling Xiao, and he seemed rather comfortable ordering his daughter around.

After they had sent Ling Xiao off, Ling Lan let out a silent breath. Finally, this great bundle of trouble, her dad was gone...

When she turned around to see those countless pairs of starry eyes, Ling Lan's headache became worse. It turned out that her troubles were just beginning. She still had to settle these five obviously overexcited and curious little followers before her eyes.

At this thought, Ling Lan could not help but sigh long and loud. Other dads helped their daughters settle problems, so why was it that when it came to her, she as a daughter had to clean up the messes her dad made? As expected, she was not a winner in life in this world. She was not a global sweetheart, a female lead showered with the love of the masses. This was why her life was so tragic, filled with trials and tribulations.



After Ling Xiao and the two bodyguards left Ling Lan's villa, they very quickly arrived at the nearest hover car stop, and waited for the next hover car to come.

At this time, one of the bodyguards suddenly spoke up, "Sir, Young Sir Lan is very strong." It was the one who had been closely watching Ling Lan and the others from his position in the corner of the hall all the while.

"Don't call him Young Sir Lan. Just Ling Lan will do," replied Ling Xiao with a subtle smile, "In future, he will be a soldier just like you all. At that time, the both of you will be his senior officers."

"Yes, Sir!" said the two bodyguards in unison. Respect shone from their eyes — General Ling Xiao was just this sort of person, treating every single soldier objectively without caring about their personal statuses.

Soon, the hover car arrived, and the bodyguards opened the door to the backseat, and Ling Xiao boarded the car and sat down. Then, the bodyguards split up. One sat at the back with Ling Xiao while the other sat in the front and swiftly entered the address of their lodgings in the military academy, and the hover car sped off...

Seated inside the hover car, Ling Xiao still maintained that typical trademark smiling face of his, but the bodyguards by his side could clearly sense his unusually excellent mood.

Ling Xiao was indeed very happy, because today's meeting had proven that Ling Lan's disguise was impeccable. After living with Qi Long and the other boys for so long, they had still not discovered that she was a girl. Just this ability alone would make it much harder for any outsiders to discover Ling Lan's secret; this caused a worry which had been weighing on him all this while to disappear.

She only needed to endure for four years and it would all be over! When she reached her fifth year, he would definitely enlist his daughter into his army division and protect her from close quarters, and then provide her with a life that would truly belong to her... Ling Xiao mentally clenched a fist and made a promise to himself.

# Chapter 292

## Ambition!

Outside the regiment commander's office of Leiting headquarters, Lin Zhidong suppressed his urge to flee and forced himself to press the doorbell.

"Who is it?" A cold voice came from within — it was the voice of the current regiment commander of the Leiting Mecha Clan, Qiao Ting.

"Regiment Commander, it is I, Lin Zhidong." Lin Zhidong sucked in a breath and stated in a still relatively steady voice.

"Come in!" At the same time that Qiao Lin's voice rang out, the room's door slid to the left. The first thing that came into Lin Zhidong's sight was a well-built youth with a stern and frosty expression seated on the sofa on the right — he was Qiao Ting.

Meanwhile, on a sofa to his side, another youth was seated. His expression was sinister and he was clearly a little younger than Qiao Ting, and he was currently looking at Lin Zhidong with a wide smile. In fact, this person was actually seated in a position which was even more easily noticeable by anyone entering the room. However, Qiao Ting's aura was too powerful, unable to be ignored, which was why the first person Lin Zhidong saw was Qiao Ting.

Seeing the other youth, Lin Zhidong's expression changed slightly, but he quickly recovered and forced himself to stay calm and walked through the doorway. As intelligent as he was, by now he had already realized that this youth must have come one step earlier to tattle to Regiment Commander Qiao. It looked like he would not be able to overcome this matter easily.

"Sit!" Qiao Ting casually pointed at the sofa across from him, signalling Lin Zhidong to sit down and speak.

Lin Zhidong sat down carefully, as if in the presence of a great enemy — this behaviour of his made a mocking smirk appear on the corner of the other youth's lips.

"I heard Lin say that, a month ago, you initiated a wagered arena battle and lost?" Right

then, two deep furrows had appeared on the stern-faced youth's brow. It was clear to see how bad his mood was.

Lin Zhidong bowed his head, deeply ashamed. "I am sorry, Regiment Commander. I was careless."

The youth who had tattled was Qiao Ting's younger brother, Qiao Lin — Lin Zhidong knew that no matter how he tried to explain, it would not stand up against one word from the regiment commander's own blood brother. The regiment commander most certainly had already formed his opinions beforehand, so he might as well admit the fault honestly — the regiment commander might be merciful this way.

Qiao Ting said nothing. His right arm resting on the arm of the sofa, his index finger and middle finger were rubbing vigorously against his thumb — this was a habitual motion of his while in thought.

Qiao Ting's silence made Lin Zhidong even more afraid to say anything; he could only watch silently as he waited for Qiao Ting's decision.

"Freshmen?" Qiao Ting seemed to be inquiring, but also seemed to be talking to himself.

"Yeah, it's that bunch of arrogant freshmen! Even creating a new cadet regiment. Who knows whether in their second year, after entering mecha piloting, this new cadet regiment will still be standing," Qiao Lin butted in with a face full of anger. He cast a cutting glare at Lin Zhidong across from them and said resentfully, "And our Vice Regiment Commander Lin, before fully understanding the other's true strength, impulsively suggested a wagered arena fight, losing all our Leiting's face, even helping to boost the New Cadet Regiment's reputation..."

Lin Zhidong could only bend his head even lower, hunching into himself. Even if he knew Qiao Lin was saying all this because Qiao Lin was dissatisfied with his position, and so was intentionally mocking him, there was nothing untrue in what the other said. On this matter, his responsibility was indeed the greatest. His tactical error had caused Leiting's reputation to be greatly impacted — if not for the fact that the Tianji incident had coincidentally occurred right after, drawing away the attention of the entire school, Leiting's situation would have been much worse than how it was now.

"Zhidong, so hastily rushing into a wagered arena fight and submitting a wager to fully

absorb the other side into our Leiting, was there some special reason behind this?" Qiao Ting stopped the motions of his fingers, peering intently at Lin Zhidong as he asked.

Lin Zhidong looked up in astonishment — he had not expected Regiment Commander Qiao Ting to be willing to hear his explanations. This made Lin Zhidong feel extremely grateful, his loyalty to Qiao Ting increasing by a level higher. He nodded solemnly and said, "Yes, there is one very important reason. I believe that taking in the New Cadet Regiment would push the power of our faction one step further."

"Even if we don't take in those punks, our Leiting will still be the number one faction in the academy." Qiao Lin did not believe Lin Zhidong's words at all, feeling that he was just making excuses.

Lin Zhidong seemed about to say something but stopped. Seeing this, Qiao Ting said, "Just speak if you have something to say. Lin is my younger brother, he will not spread what we say here lightly." Hearing this, Qiao Lin sent a glare in Lin Zhidong's direction, believing that Lin Zhidong was certainly doing this on purpose, trying to get his elder brother to think that he was unreliable.

Lin Zhidong knew that this time, Qiao Lin had truly been offended. Still, Lin Zhidong could do nothing about it — who asked Qiao Lin to find him disagreeable? Till today, he did not know why this was so.

Although Lin Zhidong felt that Qiao Lin was untrustworthy with secrets, since the regiment commander had spoken, Lin Zhidong could not continue to hedge. He passed a document he always kept on him over to Qiao Ting, and indicated for him to take a look.

Qiao Ting flipped it open casually, and then he abruptly sat up straight, the expression on his face becoming grim and focused. Meanwhile, from the moment his brother had flipped open the first page, Qiao Lin had scampered over to peek at the document as well, and when he saw the grading of 'excellent' and 'good' attached to row after row of names, he too was dumbfounded.

Qiao Ting snapped the file closed and asked sternly, "Is this document true?"

Lin Zhidong nodded heavily, "I retrieved it from the S-tier partition of the academy mainframe. There can be no error."

Qiao Ting stood up, pacing back and forth a few times before turning his head to ask, "Who else knows of this information?"

Lin Zhidong replied, "All the other vice regiment commanders of Leiting know, but I've already told them clearly from the start that this information stays with us few. All of the documents were destroyed after they looked at it..."

"Good, well done!" Qiao Ting shouted abruptly, a slight smile finally appearing on his austere face. He paced back and forth animatedly a few times in the room, involuntarily clenching his fists in his excitement and said, "Their joining would not only advance our Leiting by a step, it might even allow us to become the true rulers of the entire military academy..."

Qiao Ting's words made Lin Zhidong excited as well. Worked up, he smiled and said, "Yes, that's what I thought back then, which was why I wanted to take in all these freshmen in one go before the other factions discovered this info..." At this point, Lin Zhidong's smile vanished, his excitement and adrenaline fading, leaving behind only endless regret. "Unfortunately, in the end, I messed up. I did not fully understand the depth of the New Cadet Regiment's strength, thus helping them increase their reputation instead."

Lin Zhidong's words made Qiao Ting's high spirits settle down as well. After some careful consideration, his mood turned up once more and he said, "No, the waged fight this time did not turn out too terrible. Although Leiting's reputation has been damaged somewhat, the other side's wager has also given us another chance to integrate them into our ranks in the future."

Lin Zhidong raised his head in confused shock, unsure why Regiment Commander Qiao Ting would say this. Was he just trying to console him?

"No, this is not consolation," said Qiao Ting, sensing Lin Zhidong's confusion, "Didn't we promise to help the New Cadet Regiment fend off all harassment from the other factions for two years? This means that, in these two years' time, the New Cadet Regiment will still be right under our watch and will not be consolidated into any of the other factions."

"This wager gives us an excuse to pull the New Cadet Regiment under our wings, preventing any of the other factions from coveting them. Once the two years are up, that will be the chance for us, Leiting, to try our hand again!" Qiao Ting's eyes were

filled with fire — just the information in this document alone was worth Leiting spending two years' time to wait and plan.

Just thinking about how he would have a chance to accomplish such a great undertaking, Qiao Ting's face was flushed with vigour and excitement. Finally, he forcefully suppressed the emotional upheaval in his heart and turned to look at Qiao Lin, whose head was spinning in confusion from the other two's conversation, and warned the other, "Lin, everything that you've heard or seen today, not one word can be leaked to the outside. Otherwise, don't blame me for skinning your hide!"

The unforgiving cold glint in Qiao Ting's eyes scared Qiao Lin so much that he shuddered, emphatically shaking his head and saying, "Never, never, I would never!"

Qiao Lin did not dare to disobey — he knew well that his elder brother was an absolutely ruthless person when the occasion called for it, so he would truly do what he dared to threaten. He really did not want to be skinned alive by his brother.

"But two years later, when you, Regiment Commander, enter an army division for your practical training, if the New Cadet Regiment produces another one or two genius mecha operators, I fear that our odds of winning a wagered fight will not be very high still." Having lost once, Lin Zhidong had become extremely cautious. Without Qiao Ting holding the fort, he still felt that it was rather risky.

At these words, Qiao Lin said angrily, "Don't worry! Two years from now, I'll definitely be able to take on the heavy responsibilities of my elder brother and make Leiting even bigger and better!" Qiao Lin had always considered himself to be the next regiment commander of Leiting, so Lin Zhidong's words had once again pricked and irritated him. Yes, he disliked Lin Zhidong so much because the other did not take him seriously, thinking he was an incapable fool — but his mecha skills were clearly not bad, able to place him within the top 5 in his class... Qiao Lin had never considered the fact that his mecha class was not a special class, merely a regular class.

"Lin, shut up!" Qiao Ting, who had always been gentle and courteous with his own younger brother, instantly berated the other angrily when he heard such foolish and self-deluded <sup>1</sup> words coming from Qiao Lin.

Qiao Lin heard Qiao Ting's angry roar and glared back with an expression of stubborn indignation. However, his eyes were already turning red, a wounded sort of feeling expressed by his gaze.

Seeing Qiao Lin like this caused Qiao Ting to sigh helplessly, "Mecha piloting is not as simple as you imagine it to be. When you advance to intermediate mecha warrior level, I'll bring you with me to a clan battle and let you properly experience the depths of mecha piloting."

He was the reason why Qiao Lin, who did not have much talent in the way of mecha piloting, had refused to listen to the advice of their family and had stubbornly insisted to apply for the Mecha Piloting specialization in the First Academy. Although his ability qualified him for the regular mecha class, in the long run, it was impossible for him to develop to Qiao Ting's level. Still, Qiao Ting knew that Qiao Lin had not given up. He worked very hard — when no one was looking, he had always been training hard in his mecha control. Qiao Lin was willing to use hard work to compensate for his lack of talent — this made Qiao Ting unable to say anything discouraging, only able to sigh in the end.

Lin Zhidong wisely sidestepped this matter between the two Qiao brothers, pretending that he knew nothing. After comforting Qiao Lin, Qiao Ting turned his head to say to Lin Zhidong, "Don't worry. We have to spend six years in the military academy. Even if we go off for practical training in an army division, we will still be military academy students and can still fight on behalf of Leiting."

Lin Zhidong lifted his head in pleasant surprise, "Regiment Commander, you're saying that..."

"Yes, two years later, I will return once more with my mecha battle squad and host this wagered fight!" After subduing the New Cadet Regiment, in his final year, he would utterly conquer the entire military academy and accomplish his grand goal of complete domination! Sheer naked ambition flashed through Qiao Ting's eyes.

Meanwhile, in the upcoming two years, the New Cadet Regiment would constantly be on Qiao Ting's mind, always within the sphere of his attention!



# Chapter 293

## A Trap!

In Li Lanfeng's villa, three uninvited guests were there once again, and their expressions were extremely solemn. These three were Zhao Jun, Han Yu, and Wei Ji.

Seated in the living room flipping through video data, Li Lanfeng saw them drop in suddenly for a visit and stared at them in confusion. He asked, "Why are your expressions so horrible? What has happened?"

Zhao Jun's face was dark as he said, "According to the latest news, the Thunder King has come out of Closed Door Meditation."

Li Lanfeng's finger jerked to a stop in the middle of swiping across the screen, then resumed its motion without any fuss. He asked, "He advanced?"

Han Yu sneered and said, "Yes, he has become the first genius mecha operator in our school who managed to advance to ace operator in his 4th year. Everyone is saying that he will be the next General Ling Xiao!"

"This is a good thing. When the time comes for us to apply for enlistment with the divisions, it won't be like this year where the divisions are being perfunctory, only sending some small fry to handle things," Li Lanfeng replied nonchalantly.

"Li Lanfeng, stop looking at that." Han Yu blocked the screen in Li Lanfeng's hands with a palm. Peering at Li Lanfeng, he said, "Don't you know what this means?"

Li Lanfeng regretfully set the miniature display in his hands aside, lifted his head, and said, "I know. The Thunder King's ascension to ace mecha operator means that he has truly become the number one within the military academy. We are no longer able to threaten his top position."

"Not just that. I'm also worried that he'll take the opportunity to dominate the entire school, perhaps even merging all the factions of the school together to become the true king of the military academy," said Wei Ji with a frown. His initial calm and unruffled air had completely disappeared at this moment — it was clear to see how great a blow

the ascension of the Thunder King was to him.

"He won't. He has just advanced to ace; his realm isn't stable yet. The Thunder King will not act against us so quickly." After some thought, Li Lanfeng outright denied this possibility.

"There will come a day when his realm will settle. We all know that the Thunder King has wanted to be the military academy's true king for a very long time," said Han Yu worriedly.

"King, is it...?" This querying tone of Li Lanfeng was airy, and a chill seemed to envelop the other three, only for the sensation to vanish in the very next second. Startled, they stared at Li Lanfeng — he still had a smile on his face, and the warm air around his body had not shifted for even a moment; it was as if that brief sense of cold had just been their imagination.

"If we want to stop him from becoming the king of the academy, we can only become even stronger." Li Lanfeng did not seem to sense the other three's shock, directly offering his own opinion.

"Although we have all advanced to special-class operator, aside from Zhao Jun, Wei Ji and I are both newbie special-class operators. Being able to stabilise this realm is already not easy, not to mention raising our level further. Probably only Zhao Jun has hope of advancing to ace operator, right?" Han Yu turned to look at the hulking physique of Zhao Jun with a hopeful expression, hoping that he would be able to hear some good news from him.

Zhao Jun shook his head. "I've not sensed the possibility of advancing to ace operator. For the near future, I can only solidify my own abilities as a special-class mecha operator."

Zhao Jun's words made disappointment emerge on Han Yu's and Wei Ji's faces. An ace operator who had stabilised his realm would be able to easily handle up to 5 or 6 special-class operators. Even if their Wuji Mecha Clan sent out a team of special-class operators to gang up on him, they would be no match for the Thunder King... Furthermore, the Thunder King had other strong and powerful teammates by his side as well, and those people were also special-class operators themselves.

"I never said that 'becoming stronger' meant advancing to ace operator level. That's

something that depends on serendipity which cannot be forced." Following their discussion, Li Lanfeng could tell that they had misunderstood his meaning, so he quickly spoke up to clarify.

"If we cannot advance to ace operator level, then how do we become stronger?" Han Yu's face instantly became grim and dark. He really hated this demeanour of Li Lanfeng's which seemed to say he had everything under control, as if indirectly showing them up as idiots. But it just so happened that they currently could not separate themselves from Li Lanfeng's strategic planning. Every time they sought out Li Lanfeng, Han Yu always felt as if his face as regiment commander was smacked thoroughly by Li Lanfeng.

"Since we cannot beat him individually, we can only obtain victory through numbers." Li Lanfeng did not seem to sense Han Yu's displeasure, still composed as he calmly stated his recommendation.

"Numbers? Leiting is the number one faction in our school, and it also has the most members among all the factions. What numbers will we use to obtain victory?" Hearing what Li Lanfeng had to say, Han Yu's face turned even darker — was this Li Lanfeng messing around with him?

"Leiting is indeed the faction with the greatest numbers in our school. None of our other factions can match up to it. But what if we combined two factions together? Or perhaps even three or four factions?" Li Lanfeng felt that the current situation did not allow for units to battle individually anymore; it was time for the factions to work together to bring down Leiting.

Li Lanfeng's words made Han Yu's and Wei Ji's eyes light up. Even as Han Yu was moved by the proposition, he could not help but hesitate a little. "Who knows if Tianji and Doha Central would be willing to collaborate." If their three factions joined forces, even though the Thunder King had advanced to ace operator, Leiting still would not be able to eat them all.

"If we want the Doha faction to work with us, I do have a plan. Right now, Tianji is at their lowest. If both your factions challenge them at the same time, I believe that our rankings will go up a little. Once we become the second faction and gain Doha as an ally, we can work with some other factions. Even without Tianji, that will not affect our going up against Leiting." Li Lanfeng dutifully outlined his plan to Han Yu. As for whether Wuji could climb over that necessary step, that would depend on whether

Han Yu had enough resolution as a leader.

Han Yu's complexion was shifting rapidly — his eyes met Wei Ji's and there was an exchange of opinions. Li Lanfeng's recommendation had perfectly scratched the itch nestled deep within Han Yu's heart. He did not dare to oppose Leiting, but he had been eyeing Tianji's number two position for all this time. And now, with Li Lanfeng's reminder, he realised that it was truly a great opportunity to snatch the position of second... he was moved!

Finally, Han Yu stood up abruptly and slammed a heavy fist onto the tea table before him. Through clenched teeth, he said, "Let's do it."

Having found some direction, Han Yu and Wei Ji quickly said goodbye to Li Lanfeng, while Zhao Jun planned to stay back for a while longer. According to him, Han Yu and Wei Ji were going to busy themselves planning and arranging this matter, and these were things he hated the most, so they should leave him out of it. As long as they told him the time and place of the operation once they were done discussing, that would do.

Han Yu and Wei Ji did not force him, for they knew Zhao Jun was a fierce brute who was all brawn and little brain. And besides, they were indeed returning to look for the top ranks of the Wuji Mecha Clan to discuss things, such as how to best use this chance to join forces with Doha and push Tianji off its pedestal to obtain the number two position in one go. As such, Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng, as external collaborators, were indeed rather unsuitable to be present at their meeting with the upper ranks of Wuji.

Zhao Jun walked the two out of Li Lanfeng's villa and then returned to the living room. He peered intently at Li Lanfeng for several seconds and then asked, "You're really that nice?" Knowing how black-bellied Li Lanfeng was so far and how he liked to entrap others, Zhao Jun just did not believe Li Lanfeng would be so generous this time and give out such a good suggestion freely.

Li Lanfeng stretched leisurely, cast an accusatory glance back at Zhao Jun, and said, "I've always been very nice, okay?" He definitely would not admit that he was a black-bellied fellow.

"Always?" Zhao Jun's lips twitched. *These words were just too fake!*

"Fine, I do indeed have some small ulterior motive. I want to know, when the Thunder

King is still unable to become the true king of the military academy after advancing to ace operator level, will he be angry enough to vomit blood?" admitted Li Lanfeng with a laugh. He too felt that his previous words were too far off the mark.

"Lanfeng, do you hate the Thunder King very much?" After a beat of silence, Zhao Jun suddenly spoke up to ask.

Li Lanfeng's smile stiffened as he turned back to ask incredulously, "Zhao Jun, why would you think that?"

"Frankly, whether or not the Thunder King manages to consolidate all the factions in the school has nothing at all to do with us. We might be collaborators with Wuji today, but we might not be tomorrow. We have had no issues in contention at all with the Thunder King, but every scheme of yours seems to be setting up roadblocks in the Thunder King's path to becoming king... I can't help but suspect your motives."

Zhao Jun was very frank — he, like Li Lanfeng, was from a third-rate planet. It could be said that qualifying for the First Men's Military Academy was definitely a one in a million chance. Therefore, besides them, no one else from their respective planets had managed to get in — this caused them to feel like they did not belong to any of the factions. Many times, Zhao Jun felt as if Li Lanfeng was just playing with the world around him. With deft and skilful manipulations, he would incite conflicts between several large factions, like just now, especially hopeful that they would actually break out into a great fight.

Zhao Jun's words made Li Lanfeng laugh once more. "I have no grudge against the Thunder King, but just imagine this — the Thunder King has everything within his grasp, but because of us small fishes from third-rate planets, his path to domination becomes riddled with difficulties and challenges, so much so that he will not succeed. Don't you think that's very interesting?"

"You..." Zhao Jun gaped at Li Lanfeng in shock. He had never known that Li Lanfeng was holding such thoughts.

"I only want to prove that even if we come from third-rate planets, we can still stir up a storm of bloody trouble within this military academy..." *Even though I am still weak and vulnerable right now, I can still prevent that person from becoming king...* The smiling Li Lanfeng adeptly secreted his true thoughts deep within his heart. There were some secrets that should never be shared.

Zhao Jun could only shake his head in resignation at those words. "Alright, your words are convincing. I would also like to see if that Thunder King can overcome all the difficulties to climb to the pinnacle of the school." Watching the show and whatnot were the things he most liked to do <sup>1</sup>.

Even though Li Lanfeng still had a smile on his face, there was an emptiness in his eyes, along with endless coldness.

"I have another question. If we plan to ally with other factions to go against the Thunder King, why do you want Wuji to go challenge Tianji? That's obviously against your original plan." Zhao Jun very quickly came up with another question. He was not at all as simple-minded as Han Yu and the others thought he was — the things he needed to know, he picked up on them much better than Han Yu and the others would.

"Compared to the Thunder King, you hate Tianji even more." Knowing Li Lanfeng too well, Zhao Jun stated his conclusion with conviction. "So, even if the timing is inappropriate, you still egged on Han Yu and the others to act against Tianji. Why is that?"

"Have you not heard about the horrific incident which happened a few days ago?" Hearing Zhao Jun ask this question, Li Lanfeng's smile finally disappeared.

"The murder of Shi Mingyi?" That was the first thing that sprang to Zhao Jun's mind.

"Since Tianji had such a shameless and despicable vice regiment commander, it's about time they paid the price," said Li Lanfeng coldly. At this moment, he no longer had any trace of warmth around him — it was clear to see how deep his hatred of this sort of thing ran <sup>2</sup>...

# Chapter 294

## Top-Class Elite [belief]!

The enlistment assessments at the military academy officially commenced; almost all of the attention of the cadets were drawn by this major assessment. As the leader of his assessment team, Ling Xiao had to be present for the first day at least. This made Ling Lan feel as if her time was her own again.

These past few days, Ling Xiao had made Ling Lan bring him all around the school, his excuse being that he wanted to understand the conditions of his daughter's campus. Regarding this, Ling Lan was extremely disdainful of Ling Xiao — could it be that when her dad was giving this reason, he had completely forgotten that he himself had graduated from this very school 20 years ago...?

Of course, Ling Lan understood inside that this was just her dad finding opportunities to get closer to her — after all, having been absent for 16 years, whether it was Ling Xiao himself or Ling Lan, they both needed this kind of opportunity. Thus, Ling Lan may have been disdainful of his lame excuse, but she still gladly accepted this task and accompanied her dad around the campus for the past few days. It should be said that the effect was still pretty good. At the very least, the two of them were no longer like they were before, awkwardly silent in each other's presence — now, they could at least find a few topics to discuss.

However, having obtained half a day of free time, after eating lunch, Ling Lan was once again summoned by her dad's incessant pestering <sup>1</sup>. Apparently, after showing his face for courtesy's sake, Ling Xiao had excused himself and then came running back.

Arriving at the place Ling Xiao was staying, Ling Lan saw Ling Xiao standing at the doorway, casual and nonchalant, and then she looked back outside where the sun was blazing brightly at the zenith of the sky, and instantly felt that going out at this time was really not a good idea.

Seeing Ling Lan frown as she looked outside, Ling Xiao glanced over as well, and then scratched his nose a little embarrassedly, "Er, it looks like it's rather hot now."

With his mind filled with the thought of seeing his daughter again, things like the

weather were not something Ling Xiao had considered. "Why don't we just rest for a bit inside?" Ling Xiao's temporary quarters was also a villa, and it was one that was even more luxurious than Ling Lan's.

Although Ling Lan was not afraid of the heat, she too did not want to go out and be roasted by the intense noon sun for no reason, so she gladly agreed. However, after she and Ling Xiao finished drinking their third pot of iced red tea, she began to think that it was rather silly for her and her dad to just keep drinking tea in silence like this.

Ling Xiao seemed to have also noticed this, and this made Ling Xiao rather dejected. Over the past few days, he had already explored all the topics they could talk about, and now, he truly did not know what else to say. Was he really going to just go over all the questions he had asked in the past few days all over again? Would this cause his daughter to run away because she really could not take it anymore? Or perhaps she would blow her top and just send a fist flying at him?

Seeing the ice in his daughter's eyes, Ling Xiao believed that it was far more likely for Ling Lan to dash away... how could he willingly let this hard-won opportunity to hang out with his daughter slip away like this? Ling Xiao began to think hard — what exactly could he ask her? A 16 years old girl should already be at the age when romantic passions begin to blossom... should he ask Ling Lan whether she has anyone she likes or perhaps admires recently?

Just as Ling Xiao was struggling with indecision, the long silent Ling Lan who had been stroking her teacup finally spoke up. "Father, do you have any virtual network login pods here?"

Ling Xiao was startled, but he quickly replied, "Yes, on the third floor!" In order to properly accommodate the assessment officers of the divisions, all their accommodations had been installed with virtual world login pods. This made it very convenient for the officers to log on to the virtual world during their spare time.

Ling Lan placed her teacup back on the tea table, lifted her head to peer intently at Ling Xiao, and said, "Father, since you're free this afternoon, come with me to explore Mecha World."

"Go to Mecha World?" Ling Xiao thought about it — ever since he had ascended to god-class operator, he had not been there for a very long time, almost about to forget the youthful days he had spent there. He too had once been an obsessed member of Mecha



World... his heart moved as his interest was piqued. Of course, most importantly, this was a personal invite from his darling daughter — even if he had never ever been to Mecha World, he would still want to go take a look now.

"Alright," Ling Xiao happily agreed. And so the father-daughter pair swiftly went up to the third floor and laid down in two virtual login pods. Right before Ling Lan entered her pod, she did not forget to tell Ling Xiao that her username in Mecha World was [Lingtian First-String].

"[Lingtian First-String]?" Ling Xiao stared at the closed hatch of the login pod beside his, and smiled contemplatively.



Meanwhile, at this time in Mecha World, in a sealed private mecha combat room, two mecha were in the middle of an intense spar.

One was a standard Federation advanced mecha, its body painted with traditional blue and white. Other than being equipped with some weapons of personal preference, almost no modifications had been done to it.

In contrast, the other mecha was extremely unique in both form and colour — it was distinctly different from the blue, white, silver, or red basic colours of standard mecha, instead coloured black, which was rather infrequently used within the Federation <sup>3</sup>. The mecha's entire outer frame, when compared to the other standard advanced mecha, was obviously much taller and bulkier — just its four limbs alone were twice the size of the other mecha's, not to mention its equipped weapons, which all belonged to the higher tier of cold weapons. With just one glance, one could tell that this mecha was most definitely a close combat type.

Anyone familiar with Mecha World would know that this type of unique mecha was certainly a special-class mecha, and those who could operate them must certainly be special-class mecha masters.

Generally speaking, when an advanced mecha warrior encountered a special-class operator, the combat would end in a one-sided win. In other words, the special-class operator would definitely obtain the final victory, while the number of moves it would take would all depend on how great the gap was between the two combatants' skills.

However, this fight was rather different. Although overall, it seemed like the advanced mecha warrior was indeed always at a disadvantage, they were only disadvantaged — the fight was not a clear one-way landslide. Several times, there were indeed precarious situations where the advanced mecha operator was being suppressed by endless blows, almost unable to catch their breath, but in the end, the advanced mecha warrior still managed to push through.

And so, the fight became a fight of endurance — in the end, what they were competing on was neither their mecha control skills, nor was it the capabilities of their mecha, but rather the stamina of the operators.

The two mecha clashed once more in mid-air, causing a loud noise of collision. In close-combat, the advanced mecha was obviously at a disadvantage — this could be seen from the distance the two needed once they sprang apart to land.

After the attack this time, the two mecha did not continue to grapple with one another, instead facing off from a distance.

"Huff huff huff..." Due to the absence of outsiders, the two mecha had opened their public comms, and intense panting could be heard coming from the comm channels.

"D\*mmmit, Li Lanfeng, you freak," The first to recover from panting was the black mecha, who could not help but swear as soon as he caught his breath. The speaker was none other than Zhao Jun, who had already advanced to special-class mecha.

"Hehe..." chuckled Li Lanfeng weakly. The gap between levels was not so easily made up — he could make it so Zhao Jun could not defeat him, but that was already the extent of his abilities. This outcome made him rather dejected — he was not at all pleased by this outcome which would already be greatly astounding by anyone else's standards.

"Wasn't I - almost - defeated - by you - a few times - back there?" Still panting heavily, Li Lanfeng spoke in fits and spurts. In terms of stamina recovery, he was no match for Zhao Jun and his type of physical constitution.

"Tsk, didn't you manage to push through? Just like an unkillable cockroach," grumbled Zhao Jun. Fighting with Li Lanfeng was always a frustrating matter for him. He kept having the sense that he could defeat the other, but he would always fall short by just that one breath. Quite a few times, the victory at-hand would just graze by him

narrowly... the disgruntlement he felt was no less than Li Lanfeng's.

"How the heck did you train? Able to resist my special-class operator attacks just as an advanced mecha operator, if you advance to special-class operator, what am I supposed to do?" Zhao Jun felt that his position as number one mecha expert was being threatened — it looked like he would have to train harder now, so as to prevent himself from being out of a job once Li Lanfeng advanced.

Zhao Jun was very rational. Ever since he had discovered how aberrant Li Lanfeng was, he had been determined to stick with Li Lanfeng. His brain was actually pretty good, but after being showed up many times by Li Lanfeng, he did not want to waste the mental effort anymore, so he had set himself the role of supreme thug... er, no, make that supreme fighter. But now, he found that this goal was actually pretty tough to realise as well.

"Don't worry, there's still quite a block of time before I advance to special-class operator level. By that time, I reckon you would already have touched upon the gates to ace operator level." Li Lanfeng had finally recovered enough to speak in proper sentences again. "So, you'll still be able to lord over me by a head. You'll be fine," consoled Li Lanfeng with a smile.

"Are you comforting me or mocking me?" Zhao Jun muttered back, discontent...

Right then, a bright red system notice startled everyone, as well as interrupted the conversation between the two.

"Heavyweight news! The great top-class mecha elite [belief] <sup>4</sup> has graced the mecha world with his presence. Does his coming herald the successive appearance of other top-level elites? It can be predicted that the mecha world will once again bear witness to great waves..."

"[belief]!" Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng shouted almost in unison. This name was just too familiar — this was the name of god-class operator Ling Xiao's mecha. Despite not knowing what Ling Xiao's name in the mecha world was, the moment this name was linked to a top-class elite, they could not help but suspect whether this person was Ling Xiao himself.

"It has to be fake, right? How could General Ling Xiao have time to come to Mecha World?" Zhao Jun's face was filled with disbelief and he was the first to voice a denial.

They were well aware that General Ling Xiao was currently establishing the 23rd Division, as busy as could be. Even if he had time, he would not come to Mecha World, this sort of virtual world where youths made up the majority. If he wanted to find a PK partner, he would more likely go to a virtual simulation mecha battle stadium specially set up for the Federation military, where only military officers in service could enter.

"I don't know, but these top-class elites are basically all old beasts from ten or so years ago or perhaps even decades before that... it could just very well be him." In contrast to Zhao Jun's disbelief, Li Lanfeng did not outright reject the possibility. Perhaps General Ling Xiao had been seized by whimsy and had decided to come back and indulge the nostalgia for his younger days. Who knows?

Leaving aside Zhao Jun's and Li Lanfeng's uncertainty, everyone else in the mecha world had also been struck dumb by this heavyweight news. It could be said that the entirety of the initially raucous virtual world descended into a long moment of silence, while there were even some mecha operators who lost their lives <sup>5</sup> to the monsters they were battling due to the distraction. However, all of this was not a problem. Very soon, the mecha world was swept up in commotion once more... people all turned to the companions beside them and asked, who in the world was this top-class elite [belief]?

Several of those with quicker minds immediately logged onto the official website of Mecha World to look up information on [belief]. Unfortunately, they were disappointed. This was because the information of top-class elites could only be accessed by elites of the same level. All they obtained from their search was the response that their strength level was not high enough, hence they did not have enough clearance. Thus, they could not glean any clues from the website.

## Chapter 295

### <Wind's Shadow>!

Ling Lan was oblivious to the things happening within Mecha World because this news had been announced a second before Ling Lan logged in, so she just so coincidentally missed this alert. If Ling Lan had known about it, she definitely would not bring her dad gallivanting all across the town...

Very swiftly, Ling Lan received a friend request from [belief]. Seeing that familiar name, Ling Lan could not help but sweatdrop. How much did her dad love this name really?

After she accepted, the other party instantly sent over a private chat request. When Ling Lan accepted it, she heard her dad's warm voice coming through, "Ling Lan, where are you?"

Ling Lan immediately told her dad her location — when she had logged off previously, she had been outside hunting monsters. Not because she wanted to collect any points from the monsters, but because in her mission to advance to advanced mecha warrior, she needed some items which would drop from these monsters.

The route Ling Lan was taking was different from other people — she never ever looked for monsters to level up, instead mostly choosing to enter the arena fights for cross-level challenges to gain a large amount of experience points in one go. This was also why Ling Lan had been able to earn enough points to advance to advanced mecha warrior in such a short amount of time. Of course, Ling Lan's personal mecha control skills were already high enough in terms of standards, allowing her to bring out the greatest combat power of the mecha she piloted, which was why she could take this shortcut.

If she had been like Qi Long and the others who had started from zero, she would have had to take her time and accumulate the fruits of hard practice. Thus, Qi Long and the others had spent a full three years to train up from trainee mecha to advanced mecha warrior. Meanwhile, at Ling Lan's speed, it would not be long before she caught up to Qi Long and the others. However, Ling Lan was planning to pause once she hit advanced mecha warrior level, because she wanted to lead Qi Long and the others

personally at that point. Through verbal teachings, self-modelling, and sparring with them using mecha, she wanted to push them into mastering all the control skills of advanced mecha warriors so that they would be able to transition smoothly into the realm of special-class operator.

Well aware of the importance of foundational controls, Ling Lan did not want her companions to fall into the common pitfall of neglecting those skills. Once they had all successfully mastered those, at that time, it would finally be time for her to let them spread their wings and fly freely.

This was because once one entered special-class operator level, one's mecha piloting would begin to display one's individual style and character. No one else would be able to help with the development of these control skills — one could only rely on oneself to contemplate and seek insight. This was also the true reason why special-class operators were also called mecha masters, while advanced mecha operators could only be called mecha warriors.

However, entering special-class operator level was still only the first step. Only by advancing into ace operator status could one prove that one's personal control style had matured and become complete enough to be considered a distinct style of its own. Many mecha masters had ended up being stuck at this level — many people would only be able to be half-assed special-class operators for their entire lives, unable to push through to find a place among the ranks of those who held true strength, ace mecha masters.



It had to be said that Ling Xiao had left Mecha World almost twenty years ago, so he had to be rather unfamiliar with this Mecha World which had been updated countless times since then. Whatever the case, Ling Lan had to eliminate the monsters in the area she was in a whole 26 times before she saw Ling Xiao's mecha landing beside her, fashionably late.

Ling Lan herself did not really care how long she had to wait; after all, she was still trying to get the mission item she needed to drop, so this was not a waste of her time. Still, when she saw Ling Xiao's mecha, her initially calm heart became unsettled, the corners of her eyes twitching noticeably.

Damm\*t, just how much of a showoff could her dad be?! Did he really not know how

much attention operating such a bright and gleaming mecha — almost bright enough to make her blind — over would bring? Ling Lan sensed motion in the distance — it looked like her father's pretty mecha had drawn some attention.

Ling Lan did not know that she had only guessed part of it — a greater reason was that this was a relatively low-level hunting ground. For such a high-end mecha to appear here was definitely unusual; thus, everyone could only think — could the person operating that mecha be that top-class elite [belief] mentioned in the system announcement?

Regardless of whether he was or not, they would not let go of any bit of possibility. Therefore, everyone who saw this mecha all headed after the mecha in the direction it was flying in, chasing after it. The fact that no one had chased up to Ling Lan's location was all thanks to how much the speed of Ling Xiao's mecha outstripped that of all of the mecha here.

Ling Xiao's mecha was indeed extremely perfect. It was neither a standard mecha nor a modified mecha, but a mecha listed by Mecha World as a top-class redemption reward, an imperial mecha. This was the only top-class mecha the people playing Mecha World could use points to redeem. As for the rumoured god-class mecha, it could only be obtained by completing a mission. And that mission had already been confirmed by the majority of people to be humanly impossible.

There were six types of imperial mecha that could be redeemed, and Ling Xiao's mecha was one of those six types. Ling Lan had taken a cursory glance at it when she was redeeming her current mecha — it was called < Wind's Shadow <sup>1</sup> >. As its name implied, this was a mecha characterised by its speed. The entire mecha was uniformly white silver in colour, its form streamlined and elegant. Any equipment and structural design that could influence its speed had been discarded, leaving only those equipment and weapons which were necessary. It could be said to be a very extreme type of mecha.

These kinds of speed-type mecha were generally built for long-range attacks. Ling Lan saw two long and thin particle beam long-barrelled guns <sup>2</sup> slung on its back, and knew her guess was not wrong. However, Ling Lan's gaze was then drawn by the two sword hilts sticking out at the mecha's waist. Based on the direction the hilts were facing, one could tell that they were not the general swords used by mecha. They were very likely short swords similar to high-frequency blades, but since the mecha already had the standard equipped high-frequency blades on it, Ling Lan could not understand why it

would have more short swords with almost the same function equipped.

Ling Lan very honestly voiced the doubts in her mind, and Ling Xiao laughed and replied, "This is the frightening aspect of this mecha. Everyone assumes that it's a long-range attack type mecha and so are usually on guard against long-range attacks, neglecting its ability to close in swiftly..."

Ling Lan's eyes lit up. "Father, you mean that, this mecha is an all-rounded mecha which is proficient at both long-range and close-range?"

Ling Lan's offensive manoeuvres were inclined towards close-range combat, but the designs of close-range combat mecha were typically very bulky and heavy. This clashed somewhat with Ling Lan's need for speed, and furthermore, Ling Lan was still a girl at heart, so she much preferred light, graceful, and elegant mecha over those great, hulking, towering types. This was why when she heard that this pretty mecha was also strong in close-range combat, her heart was moved.

"Yes, because it's extraordinarily fast, it can switch freely between close-range and long-range attacks, flustering the opponent. This is its strength, but also its weakness at the same time." Seeing that Ling Lan had great interest in this mecha, Ling Xiao began introducing it in more detail, "It requires its operator to satisfy three conditions. Otherwise, even if one has this mecha, they would be unable to use this mecha to its full capacity."

"What three conditions?" Ling Lan was listening very carefully. Although she could not possess this mecha which she coveted right now, this did not prevent her from making this mecha her future goal; for things she needed to pay attention to, Ling Lan would take them extremely seriously.

"One, the operator's reflexes must be exceedingly quick to be able to keep up with the speed of the mecha itself. Two, the operator's hand speed must reach a frighteningly high rate, otherwise they will not be able to execute any sequence of action transitions during high-speed movements. Three, the demand on the operator's physical condition is high. It should be known that executing action transitions at high speeds puts three to four times the burden on the body than piloting a mecha at regular speeds. Without a strong and stout physique, one can never operate this mecha well. Otherwise, the operator would become injured simply by making a few moves, to say nothing of operating this mecha into battle."



Ling Xiao listed out each of the requirements to pilot this mecha, when in fact, he really wanted to say outright — *Oh daughter, this mecha is not destined for you.* A girl's body was just inherently weaker, unable to reach that level of toughness required even with stringent training.

Ling Lan only nodded after hearing all this, though of course she did not forget to ask what Little Four, who was within a little black room, thought about these conditions.

Why was Little Four in a little black room? Well, this had to be explained from the beginning. Every time they met with Ling Xiao, Little Four just could not keep his composure. Therefore, whenever Little Four regressed into a mindless fan, Ling Lan would shut him up in a small black room for a while so he could calm down. Of course, if Little Four behaved well, he would be let out again. Today, Little Four had once again lost control when Ling Lan had been drinking iced red tea with Ling Xiao in stilted silence. That was why he was currently stuck inside that small black room, waiting for Ling Lan to show mercy again.

Little Four was just being bored out of his mind in the little black room when he heard Ling Lan's question. He instantly patted his little chest and guaranteed that as long as he, Little Four, was around, his boss could have as tough a body as she wished. She could control whatever <Wind's Shadow>, <Wind's Form>, or anything else she wanted.

Little Four's answer made Ling Lan relax. She secretly set obtaining this <Wind's Shadow> mecha as the goal she would accomplish within the next few years. Meanwhile, Ling Xiao thought his daughter had understood his intentions and received his counsel, and so relaxed as well. Ling Xiao did not know that Ling Lan had indeed listened to him, but her choice was completely contrary to what Ling Xiao was hoping for.

Of course, Ling Xiao was not the type to take things for granted; he was about to personally ask what Ling Lan thought when he suddenly heard some commotion coming from a distance. He could even vaguely hear someone saying 'is it over there?'...This made Ling Xiao hold back on what he had intended to say, turning to look in the direction of the noise with a troubled expression, uncertain what was going on.

Ling Lan had also heard the voices and figured things out instantly. She said to her father, "Not good. Let's run."

Huh? Run? Ling Xiao did not know why they had to run, but seeing that his daughter had already activated her mecha and was swiftly running towards a dense forest in the distance, he dared not tarry, chasing after her quickly.

They had just dashed into the forest and concealed themselves when quite a number of mecha showed up in the initially endlessly empty grass fields. These were the people who had been attracted by Ling Xiao's mecha and had rushed here in pursuit.

"It's not here either! Looks like this isn't the spot." Everyone saw the empty fields before them and turned to leave despondently.

Even if there was the possibility of hiding in the dense forest ahead, everyone had naturally overlooked this avenue of thought. This was because they subconsciously believed that no one would do so and seek death. It should be known that the savage beasts in that dense forest were several times stronger than the savage beasts in the plains — even if it were a special-class operator going in, they would be coming out horizontally <sup>3</sup>.

Right then, they had all forgotten that the one they were seeking was a top-class elite — how could he be afraid of these savage beasts? It could only be said that these people were fooled by their own preconceptions. They were all low-level mecha operators — even special-class operators were existences that they had to look up to — so it was very likely that they just could not comprehend what a top-class elite truly meant.

# Chapter 296

## Mecha Instructor!

Ling Xiao and Ling Lan hid in the forest, coolly watching batch after batch of mecha come and go. Even though they had to hide in the forest for up to an hour, there was not one trace of impatience on their faces. It could be seen that both father and daughter had extraordinarily strong patience.

Ling Xiao glanced at the completely still Ling Lan in her mecha by his side and just knew that his daughter was extremely calm. The feeling called pride reared up in his heart once more — just this patience alone was not something an ordinary person could possess.

Following the passage of time, their patch of grass finally regained its initial peace and quiet. Only then did Ling Lan move her mecha, and she could not help but say, "Father, you should keep a lower profile. Why don't you change to a slightly more common mecha?" She did not want to keep hiding here in this dense forest, unable to go out.

Ling Xiao was silent for a beat, then sighed and said, "This is already my worst mecha."

In his virtual mecha hold, all the other mecha were even higher level than this one. One of them was even the so-called god-class mecha he had obtained by completing that horrific mission, while several others were exclusive special editions specially gifted to him by the Mecha World after he had created a few imperial level skills in the game. These were all representations of his personal identity — the moment he piloted those mecha out, just the fire phoenix logo on their chests alone would allow others to guess who he was...

Ling Lan was utterly speechless. The two of them once again descended into wordless silence. But then, right at that moment, Ling Lan's heart clenched, a sense of danger suddenly rushing into her. Without thinking, Ling Lan chose to leap up and dodge instantly. When she turned around, she saw Ling Xiao, who had initially been standing immobile beside her, slowly in the middle of resheathing the two short blades of his mecha back at his waist. Meanwhile, on the ground beneath his mecha, two extremely ferocious-looking forest savage beasts were laid out.

Seeing this, Ling Lan's heart was shaken — when she had sensed a threat earlier, she could only choose to evade. But Ling Xiao had been able to easily finish off these ambushing savage beasts coming from behind him. From the two bodies laying on the ground, she could clearly see that there was only one point of fatal injury on them. In other words, Ling Xiao had instantly drawn his swords, both swords stabbing out to kill one savage beast each in the blink of an eye.

This may seem like a simple thing, but to do it was certainly not easy. A savage beast's life force was extremely formidable — even if one struck a fatal weakness directly, their powerful vitality would still allow these savage beasts a chance to carry out a final counterattack. This was precisely why many people did not dare to attack these type of savage beasts at close range.

However, all of this was no problem at all when it came to Ling Xiao. With clean and efficient moves, he had eliminated all danger.

"When you strike their vital points, you must instantly sever their nerves and disable their reflexes in one go. This way, the savage beasts' ability to counterattack will be destroyed. However, this kind of ability requires tens of thousands times of training before you will be able to do it. It cannot be rushed," Ling Xiao knew what Ling Lan was bothered about and so spoke up to explain.

Ling Lan nodded at his words. Her eyes shone vibrantly, because she had discovered that her father Ling Xiao was most likely the best instructor in this world to mentor her in mecha control.

Though Instructor Number Three in the learning space was indeed very strong in terms of mecha control, because the world she lived in now was still different from the world the instructors had come from, there were still some aspects which Ling Lan found rather difficult while learning from him. It should be said that the control methods Ling Lan was learning were modified from the control methods of their world, based off the results of Instructor Number Three's analysis of this world's mecha. Despite being very high-level, those methods could not achieve true 100% compatibility...

However, Ling Xiao was different. He was one of the top mecha operators in this world to begin with, and all the control methods he had learned were the accumulated results of this world over thousands of years. It should be said that Ling Xiao's control skills were the most appropriate for the mecha presently being used by the

Federation, and he would be able to let Ling Lan truly understand the mecha of this world.

Ling Lan was rather frustrated at this time — why had she not realised this over these past few days? Actually wasting so many days for no good reason. Knowing that her dad's time was precious, Ling Lan decided that she could not continue wasting it any further, so she said to Ling Xiao seriously, "Father, you should be free these few days, right?" Ling Lan's eyes were sparkling brilliantly, her eyes shining with boundless hope...

Could it be that his daughter had acknowledged his fatherly love? Ling Xiao was overjoyed — did this mean that his daughter was willing to accept him now and call him 'daddy' affectionately? He quickly nodded repeatedly, "Yes, I'm extremely free."

"Then instruct me a little on mecha controls." Ling Lan's subsequent words made Ling Xiao's mood plummet from the heights of heaven straight down into hell. He was greatly depressed, tears all over his face inside.

*Oh daughter, daddy came all this way to come into the military academy undercover, just so I could establish a deep and meaningful father-daughter relationship with you, not so I could PK with you and be your instructor...*

But facing that bright-eyed gaze of Ling Lan's, Ling Xiao just could not say anything to refuse. He could only nod and say, "Okay."

Hearing Ling Xiao agree, Ling Lan's lips quirked up instantly. Even though Ling Xiao could not see his daughter's expression, for some reason, he just felt that his daughter was in a great mood. He could only smile wryly and console himself that he had finally done something that made his daughter happy, that all his efforts had not been for nothing.

An excited Ling Lan was completely an action-oriented Ling Lan — without saying anything more, she led her dad back to the city closest to them, Clear Winds City, running all the way. They came to the mecha combat hall at the city centre, and found an empty private room and requested entry for a spar.

Her entire mind filled with thoughts of learning from Ling Xiao, Ling Lan did not notice that when she and Ling Xiao had entered Clear Winds City, they had been noticed by those sharp-eyed people at the city gates. It could not be helped — Ling Xiao's mecha

was just too unique; there was no way to conceal it. Some people were even quicker, instantly taking photos of the two of them flying across the city and uploading them onto the official website. The title of the post was naturally 'Top-class Elite [belief] Sighted'.

This news caused a commotion instantly, the post scoring several billion hits within just a few minutes. When someone pointed out that the gleaming and eye-catching mecha in the photograph was the top imperial mecha in the mecha world, the entire mecha world was rocked to the core.

For context, imperial operators were very difficult to see in the mecha world now. These top-class masters were now all old men who had become famous a decade or even a few decades ago. They were all basically already living reclusively, rarely sighted. There was even a time when many people questioned whether there were any imperial operators existing at all within the mecha world. And this time, this photograph proved that the imperial operators of rumour truly did exist in Mecha World, and one had finally appeared.

Everyone was worked up, especially since the post stated very clearly that the photo was taken at Clear Winds City. Having found some direction, the mecha operators all flocked towards Clear Winds City... fortunately, Ling Lan and Ling Xiao were both moving extraordinarily fast, not meandering inside the city for long. They had directly headed straight into the combat room of the mecha combat hall to fight, thus dodging this crisis, not being trapped by the mecha operators who had rushed over because of the news and jammed up the city.

Nevertheless, the small little Clear Winds City had turned into a choked up hive of activity within the course of several minutes. Those outside could not get in, while those inside could not get out either, causing the entire city to become unbearably congested.



Inside their own private combat room, when Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng saw the news about the top-class elite [belief] descending upon Mecha World, they no longer had the mood to continue sparring. They too wanted to see what the top-class elite [belief] was like and so were preparing to go outside and try their luck.

They had just left the private room on their end when Zhao Jun received a text message

from a member of his team.

Zhao Jun instantly stopped moving after he glanced at the message, prompting Li Lanfeng to ask him curiously, "Why'd you stop?"

Zhao Jun smiled wryly and said, "It looks like we can't get out anymore."

Ah? Taken aback, Li Lanfeng immediately used his communicator to check, and after finding out about the situation, he too smiled bitterly and said, "Who would have expected that [belief] would actually be at Clear Winds City. I really don't know if we're lucky or unlucky..." Lucky, because they were in the same city; unlucky, because they were trapped within the combat hall, unable to go out.

"We just weren't destined to meet that elite," said Zhao Jun regretfully, "Since we can't go out, why don't we have another spar?" He had no intention of going out to crowd with the people outside.

Li Lanfeng naturally agreed and said, "That's fine."

Obtaining Li Lanfeng's agreement, Zhao Jun bent his head over his communicator, connecting to the A.I. of the mecha combat hall as he said, "Let's just go back to our previous room, 817." Even as he spoke, he keyed in the number '817', and without even noticing the alert tagged to the room, he clicked to enter.

Seeing Zhao Jun's entire mecha suddenly disappear before his eyes, Li Lanfeng shook his head helplessly. Knowing that the impatient Zhao Jun must have already gone ahead to room 817, he quickly connected to the mecha combat hall's A.I. as well and selected room 817 too, then chose to enter...

Li Lanfeng unintentionally saw that the number of the people in the room was 3... huh? What was happening?

The next second, Li Lanfeng had entered room 817. In a corner of the room, he saw that familiar black-coloured special-class mecha of Zhao Jun's. Not only that, on the stage in the middle of the room, two mecha were facing off against one another. One was an extremely common standard intermediate mecha, while the other was an extremely dazzling and beautiful mecha. With just one glance, Li Lanfeng could tell that this was the rumoured top-class imperial mecha...

"What in the world is this?" Li Lanfeng was stunned by this scene before his eyes, and

quickly sent a private message to Zhao Jun.

Zhao Jun very quickly responded with a message of his own, "Shh, don't make a sound. That imperial mecha's operator is most likely [belief]. Let's observe quietly. Don't let them discover us and kick us out..." Zhao Jun worked hard to shrink in on his own mecha. Right then, he truly wished that his mecha could instantly become tiny — best if it could become a speck of dust, invisible to the naked eye.

Li Lanfeng saw Zhao Jun's actions and sweatdropped profusely. This fellow... did he not know that no matter how much he tried to hunch in on himself, these two hulking mecha they were piloting just had no way of becoming any bit smaller? This series of actions by Zhao Jun only made him even more conspicuous.



"Do you know those two mecha?" Ling Xiao had long noticed these two mecha that had entered behind them, and he turned to ask Ling Lan about them.

Ling Lan shook her head and said, "No, should we kick them out?"

Even though she had left messages for her companions, asking them to come to room 817 of Clear Winds City to observe the mecha fight between her and Ling Xiao, Qi Long and the others had soon responded with news that the entire traffic of Clear Winds City was already paralysed. They just had no way of getting there.



# Chapter 297

## The Composition of a Battle Clan!

For this reason, Qi Long was so frustrated he could almost bang his head into a wall, while Luo Lang was actually tearing up. The others were not reacting that much better either — after all, this was a mecha instructional fight from a god-class operator! How lucky did they have to be to witness that?! But now they had to watch helplessly as this great fortune slipped right through their fingers, unable to do anything about it...

Ling Lan could only placate and comfort them, promising that they would still have opportunities in the future. At that time, she would definitely inform them beforehand to enter the combat room in advance so they could observe. Only then did these bunch of mournful brats subside.

It was precisely because of that that Ling Lan had not set a passcode on their room at the very first moment to restrict outsiders from entering. By the time she had settled her companions, two strangers had already entered the private room.

Ling Xiao was nonchalant about it. "No need. Since they have already come here, it can be considered that they're fated to see us. Besides, they don't know us. Let them watch a little, and if they gain some insight, that's their fortune." Ling Xiao was not someone who would stick to the beaten track <sup>1</sup>, otherwise he would not often invite others to PK with him at the military-exclusive combat fields. The stronger the Federation mecha masters were, the gladder Ling Xiao would be. He was a pure-minded military man.

"Since, father, you have said so, then let them stay." Ling Lan agreed with her dad's mindset. The mecha operators in Mecha World came from all the various star systems of the whole Federation. No one could tell who another was, or which planet they came from. If those spectators could gain something from this fight, it would indeed be a kindness on their part.

Ling Lan recalled the first time she had entered Mecha World and met that cheetah mecha. They had not known each other, but had had a startlingly amazing rapport. During that time, if not for the other's constant companionship and their mutual encouragement and supervision, perhaps she might not have been able to endure

through that period of dry and monotonous foundational training.

Ling Lan cherished this sort of heaven-given serendipity, and so did not want to stand in the way of it. Since her father was not opposed, Ling Lan decided to just let them watch. Of course, the prerequisite being that they knew their limits and did not disturb her and her father.



On the stage, the two mecha that had been standing around casually began to shift. The intermediate mecha suddenly raised its hand to draw the long weapon from its back and got into an attacking stance, while the imperial mecha remained still and unmoving as before.

At this point, Zhao Jun could not help commenting surreptitiously, "Lanfeng, this match is probably going to end in one move. The gap between the strength of the two is just too wide. The intermediate mecha will definitely be unable to withstand an attack from the imperial mecha."

"It won't end like that," Li Lanfeng responded confidently.

"Ah? Why not?" Zhao Jun was boggled.

"Just think, which imperial operator would have the free time to PK an intermediate mecha operator? I'm guessing that the latter is just a disciple of the imperial operator, which is why the former would come to instruct him a little," Li Lanfeng analysed, "In this match, the imperial operator will definitely control his strength, perhaps even sealing away some advanced control skills and killing moves."

"In other words, this is an instructional fight." Zhao Jun's eyes brightened. Instructional fights were not only extremely useful to the one fighting, spectators would also learn quite a bit. However, Zhao Jun began worrying once more, carefully asking, "Lanfeng, do you think they'll chase us out? After all, this type of instructional fight is usually related to some sect legacies and secrets."

Li Lanfeng glared exasperatedly at Zhao Jun, "You've only now noticed this point? Still, it's been so long. Since they have not kicked us out, they are likely to have tacitly agreed to our presence here."

"Ah? Really?" Li Lanfeng's words made Zhao Jun ecstatic.

"Yes, of course, they could also have mistaken us for people they know, but that possibility is almost zero, so it can be excluded." Li Lanfeng knew well that it was indeed possible to conceal one's ID in Mecha World so that name cards would have to be exchanged before one's name would be revealed. However, this feature was ineffective against top-class masters like imperial operators — that was a sign of respect and distinction Mecha World afforded to imperial operators. Thus, it was obvious that the other must know that the two of them were strangers.

"I believe that, they have chosen not to kick us because they intend to give us a chance." Li Lanfeng felt that this was the likeliest possibility. Many top-class masters believed very strongly in fate and serendipity — perhaps the other felt that he and Zhao Jun's stumbling into this room was fated, and so left them alone.

"That's great!" Zhao Jun clenched his fists, exhilarated. Li Lanfeng's words moved him greatly — if he could learn anything at all from this imperial operator, he would never ever forget this fated kindness for the rest of his life.

"Our luck today is truly incredible..." said Li Lanfeng with a sigh. Perhaps his destiny was not going to be as tragic as he had thought — would this be the turning point of his life?

"Oh, they're starting!" cried Zhao Jun, instantly calling Li Lanfeng back from his scattered musings.

On the stage, the two mecha divided by a great disparity in strength finally clashed for the first time.

Facing her unfathomable father Ling Xiao, Ling Lan chose to take the initiative and attack. She just did not have the confidence that she would be able to withstand her dad's powerful attacks, so she decided to take the advantage of striking first.

Ling Lan could be seen to control her mecha to sprint forwards like a gust of wind, striking out towards Ling Xiao's mecha. When she was about 3 metres away, Regretless, which had been hanging low, was abruptly lifted up into a diagonal slash, drawing a streak of cold light through the air.

This was a mid-range attack! While Ling Lan had been waiting, she had already considered things thoroughly — the only close-range weapons on her father's mecha

were his short swords, so he did not have a long cold weapon like Regretless to fight against her. This undoubtedly gave Ling Lan a slight upper hand in terms of weapons, and this was also her only advantage.

"Not bad!" Seeing his daughter choose to execute a mid-range attack with her long weapon, Ling Xiao unstintingly gave praise. Against such a formidable opponent like himself, with no chance of winning, Ling Lan could still identify and use her greatest advantage to strike out against a weakness of his — this was undoubtedly a testament to Ling Lan's levelheadedness and strategic mind.

However, Ling Xiao was a god-class operator after all. Moreover, he was operating a formidable imperial mecha — both in terms of control skills and plain mecha advantage, his strength exceeded Ling Lan's by too much. The counterplan Ling Lan had worked so hard to execute simply would not work against Ling Xiao.

With an elegant slide-step, Ling Xiao operated his mecha to twist to one side, dodging this streak of savage light. At the same time, the arms of his mecha folded firmly over the gleaming blade, actually performing an empty-handed weapon grab with his mecha.

Even though Ling Lan's attack was already so fast that it was almost impossible to catch with one's eyes, for Ling Xiao, it was still a little slow. He easily caught Ling Lan's Regretless between his palms.

"Ling Lan, this move won't work against me," said Ling Xiao with a smile, "You'll need to come up with something else."

"Father, don't get too careless now." The right arm of Ling Lan's mecha suddenly shook and pulled back, and Ling Xiao felt that long sword between his mecha's palms slipping away like a slippery fish, escaping from his tight clasp.

Ling Xiao's heart jolted and he instantly dashed back, once again pulling a distance away from Ling Lan.

He stared curiously at Regretless in Ling Lan's hands and could not help but ask, "This weapon is very unique. What are its attributes?" This particular quality which let it escape was something even Ling Xiao had never seen before

"Its special attributes are high tensile strength and sharpness," replied Ling Lan.

Ling Xiao immediately opened up his mecha's palm, and an extremely faint line could be seen on it. This made even Ling Lan <sup>2</sup> exclaim in awe, for it should be known that the outer shell of an imperial mecha was so strong that even the Federation's strongest beam saber would not be able to leave a mark on it. Who would have expected this Regretless to be able to do so...

"This weapon is very powerful," lauded Ling Xiao.

"This is the work of one of the seniors in the academy. As long as I keep it well, even when I upgrade to ace mecha, it'll still be useful," Ling Lan was indeed very fond of Regretless; her introduction of it clearly carried a trace of pride.

"Once that senior of yours grows up and reworks this weapon two or three times, perhaps you might be able to use it for even longer," exclaimed Ling Xiao.

"It can still be reworked two or three times?" Ling Lan was overwhelmed with curiosity — she had thought that all weapons were forged to completion in one go.

"Of course. That's why a mature mecha battle clan must have an outstanding mechanic. They can help a battle clan's combat power rise vertically." Of course, once one reached imperial level and above, all this talk was just passing clouds.

"Aren't mecha battle clans all made up of people from the mecha piloting specialization?" Ling Xiao's words confused Ling Lan. She had truly thought that mecha battle clans were organisations built by a group of people who specialized in mecha piloting.

"Of course not..." Ling Xiao replied, astounded. Could it be that Ling Lan did not know about this? However, after a beat, Ling Xiao figured it out. Generally, it was the father's job to teach about all this, but he had been missing for 16 years, and since coming back, he had been bogged down with various official duties. Thus, he had not had any chances to communicate properly with his daughter, much less even think about teaching her all this.

Of course, if the student's father was not a mecha operator, hence not allowing them to receive such instruction from their father, when they advanced to the second year of school, there would be mecha instructors who would guide students in building their own battle clans or in choosing one to join. At that time, Ling Lan too would have learned about the composition of a battle clan. However, right now, Ling Lan was still

a first year, so she had yet to have a chance to learn any of this.

At this thought, Ling Xiao apologised and said, "This is all my fault, not instructing you in these things in time." At the heart of it, it was still his own dereliction of duty as a father.

"In fact, the members of a mecha battle clan are not solely from the mecha piloting specialization. It can encompass many specializations — it all depends on what route your battle clan wants to take. Generally speaking, a battle clan needs three types of mecha warriors — close-range, comprehensive, and long-range — along with logistics and support units, which includes a repairman, a doctor, and a quartermaster, etcetera. Thus, at minimum, a battle clan requires 6 people. However, this type of small battle clan is inadequate to support the logistics component in the clan for long, so now, a developed mecha battle clan needs at least 12 people — 8 mecha warriors and 4 support personnel." Ling Xiao continued to explain, "With 2 warriors for each support personnel, a mecha battle clan will be able to continue running smoothly. Each person in the clan will be able to benefit and grow without any wastage."

Support personnel required warriors to provide for them, otherwise they would not be able to procure any resources to improve their abilities. This was why smaller battle clans were gradually being eliminated. Of course, a battle clan could also abandon logistics and support, but this type of battle clan would definitely be unable to compete with other clans which had better allocation of roles, so their elimination was also inevitable in the long run.

# Chapter 298

## The Price of Fate!

"In other words, if I want to lead my companions further, I need to make sure to allocate my members' roles within the battle clan in the most logical and perfect way?" Ling Lan scrunched up her brow. It looked like she had taken things too much for granted...

At this time, Ling Lan finally figured out some things she had always found puzzling before — why Lin Zhong-qing and Han Jijun had chosen to apply for other specializations in the military academy even though their mecha control standards were not much lower than Xie Yi's, Luo Lang's, or the others. In Mecha World, they were all already at the level of advanced mecha warrior. It turned out that they were already familiar with the composition of a battle clan, and so had made their choice early on for the sake of the future of their battle clan. In contrast, as the boss, she had been rather muddled and clueless till now — though she had known subconsciously that they had done it for the team, she had not understood their motives as deeply as she did now.

"This is absolutely necessary. For example, that senior who made this weapon for you would be a great candidate. You should know that for a person to create such an outstanding weapon, he must have reached the pinnacle in terms of his mastery of materials. He is most definitely a prodigy in engineering and modification. He'll be able to help you greatly by increasing your battle clan's strength by onefold or even more," replied Ling Xiao, "If he hasn't joined any other battle clan yet, I recommend you act quickly. This kind of prodigy is a truly rare and lucky find."

"Hn, I'll have to think well on this." Regarding the composition of their battle clan, Ling Lan still wanted to check in with Qi Long and the others first. After all, even if she wanted to expand the team and take in new people, Ling Lan still hoped to receive their agreement.

Right then, Ling Lan could not help but think of that dux of the military medical research specialization, Li Shiyu. At first, she had only felt that the other's medical skills were amazing, which had moved her to establish a good relationship with him

in hopes that if her team members were injured in future, they would have a trustworthy doctor to rely on. Now, from the looks of it, she needed to change her strategy and redraw her plans.

Ling Lan also recalled that the students studying to become military doctors typically would not join any battle clans, strictly holding onto a neutral stance. She reckoned that this dux, Li Shiyu, would also be the same. Ling Lan decided that no matter what, she must manipulate... er, no, force... wait, that's not right either... snatch him for her clan! Ling Lan silently clenched her fists tightly. She could not let this type of prodigy slip away just like that from her hands.

Li Shiyu, who had initially been not really all that important in Ling Lan's mind, had all of a sudden become Ling Lan's top priority target. Right then, Li Shiyu, who was still immersed in medical research in the Military Medical Research Centre, did not know that his future had already been decided for him by Ling Lan without him being the wiser! Let us take a moment of silence to mourn for him!

"If you really want to establish a battle clan, you indeed need to think well on this." When Ling Xiao had mentioned the first half of his sentence, he could already feel the endless cold air seeping out from within Ling Lan's mecha, and he smiled wryly.

It was probably impossible for his daughter to cast aside those few little companions who had grown up alongside her. At this moment, Ling Xiao did not know whether to be proud or sad <sup>1</sup> — his daughter, who should have been a bundle of adorableness to be cosseted in the palms of his hands, had now become so cold, stern, and domineering, her boss aura even more formidable and fearsome than his had been while he had been thriving in the military academy back in his time...

Say, had his wife really given birth to a daughter? Ling Xiao was suddenly uncertain. He had the impulse to immediately contact his wife to confirm — back then, had she really given birth to a girl? Could it be that his wife had wanted a girl so much that she had forcefully decided to treat their son as a daughter?

This notion was quickly dispelled by Ling Xiao because it was an absolutely impossible scenario. He was really too stupid to even consider it, certain to be chased out of the bedroom by his wife for half a year if he asked her...

"Of course, there are two ways the members of a battle clan can join. One way is for them to be permanent members. These people must have gone through some testing



and have earned your trust. And then there are some talents who may not be so reliable, who you can choose to sign on into your clan temporarily. For example, you could take in some battle clan members temporarily, just for these few years at the academy, and once you all graduate, the contract automatically ends."

Ling Xiao shoved aside all those messy thoughts in his mind, continuing on with the previous topic and listing the rest of the key information about battle clans, "Aside from a few necessary permanent members, a typical battle clan is primarily made up of contracted members, because no one can guarantee that in future, there won't be better team members who come along. One more thing — permanent team members who are not united in spirit, who do not trust each other unconditionally, may very well choose differently when the time comes to choose their army division in the future. This would not create much difficulty for those team members themselves, but for the battle clan leader, the departure of a permanent member could be devastating. This would indicate that this team leader does not possess great leadership abilities and may also have problems with his judgement of character. In the army divisions, this would significantly impact that leader's future progress. Of course, this point won't influence you much. As long as you think they're alright, just take in whoever you want. You don't have to worry."

Ling Lan would definitely be in Ling Xiao's army division in the future. As long as she did not commit any major fault, ascending the ranks step by step would certainly be no issue. Besides, Ling Xiao and Lan Luofeng were already in tacit agreement — they would gradually weaken the presence of the male Ling Lan, not allowing her to stand out too much in the division. Therefore, even if her battle clan really split apart in future, there would not be much impact on Ling Lan's future.

"A battle clan usually only stabilises properly after the clan has entered an army division. That's why the clan leader who organised the clan would mostly choose to have temporary contracts with the members, waiting to properly establish the battle clan after he has chosen and entered an army division." Ling Xiao went through all the important parts of building a battle clan.

Ling Lan nodded pensively, and then Ling Xiao asked, "Right, are the specializations of all those companions of yours in Mecha Piloting?"

"Hm, Lin Zhong-qing chose Logistics, Han Jiyun chose Starship Command, while Qi Long, Luo Lang and Xie Yi chose the same as me, Mecha Piloting." Ling Lan responded to Ling Xiao's question by listing out all the specializations of her companions.

Ling Xiao's eyes sparkled at this response. Inside, he was happy for his daughter's sake — these little fellows had truly been aiming for the perfect establishment of a battle clan. "Are Qi Long, Luo Lang and Xie Yi particularly strong in terms of combat ability? And are their awakened innate talents more suited to mecha piloting?"

"Yes, compared to Lin Zhong-qing and Han Jijyun, it is indeed so," Ling Lan nodded and said.

Pleased, Ling Xiao nodded and said, "From the looks of it, your battle clan is still lacking a strategic adviser, a doctor, and an engineer-mechanic. High level engineer-mechanics are generally in high demand. If you can't find a particularly exceptional one, I recommend you look for a skilled mecha repairman. That would be more useful than an average engineer-mechanic. The extra slots you have on your team can be filled with several other strong mecha operators."

"There's no need to look for a strategic adviser. That's Han Jijyun's secondary specialization. He was already exceptionally gifted in that area, only choosing Starship Command for the future of the battle clan," Ling Lan conveyed the situation with Han Jijyun to Ling Xiao.

Ling Xiao found himself speechless. He really had no words to describe how lucky Ling Lan was. Actually having such an exceptional prodigy among the companions she grew up with, able to take on two roles... this way, the battle clan would have one less support member to provide for, and the pressure would be much less. It could be said that in comparison to other similar 12-man battle clans, Ling Lan's battle clan would definitely be much stronger because of this <sup>2</sup>.

"Ling Lan, you need to cherish these companions well. They're really very good," said Ling Xiao seriously. Since the members were giving their all to contribute to the formation of the battle clan, as the clan leader, Ling Lan needed to live up to their contributions.

Ling Lan's lips quirked up at these words, and she nodded solemnly and said, "Don't worry, father, they are the most important friends of my life. I will definitely treasure them."

That said, Ling Lan's gaze narrowed in contemplation, silently considering a candidate for the engineer-mechanic of her team. No matter what, getting to know [No Mecha Unrepaired] in Mecha World was indeed a stroke of luck, plus the other was also from

the First Men's Military Academy — he was truly the most suitable candidate. At first, she had only thought to establish a good connection with the other, but now, this idea of taking him in was indeed a good one. It would resolve the problem of finding an extremely important support member for her battle clan.



Right then, [No Mecha Unrepaired], who was in the Suncreed City Library engrossed in researching all sorts of blueprints and reference materials, felt a sudden chill go through his body. He lifted his head warily, silently observing the other fellow aficionados in the library who were similarly bent over their own blueprints and diagrams in focused study. After all, he had offended the Thunder King before; who knew whether the other would send people to trouble him here in Suncreed City...

He looked left and he looked right, however, no matter how he looked, he could see nothing strange... could it be that he was too tired lately, thus messing up his sense of perception? [No Mecha Unrepaired] decided to finish up with the diagram he was studying and then take a good rest so that he could avoid this sort of paranoia messing with his productivity...



At this thought, Ling Lan involuntarily turned her head to glance at the two people watching the fight. Could these two people also be serendipitous acquaintances for her? Ling Lan's mind stirred, and she turned to ask Ling Xiao, "Father, what are the IDs of those two mecha?"

"Why do you ask for their IDs? Has something happened?" Ling Xiao frowned. He had allowed those two to spectate because he wanted to show them a kindness, but he did not want them to distract his daughter from learning.

"No, I'm just wondering whether they could be a fated connection for me. They could turn out to be a member of my battle clan in future," said Ling Lan coolly, "Fated meetings are not so easy to come by; perhaps they should pay some price for this..."

Er... is this his daughter? Isn't this too sly and cunning? Ling Xiao could not help but glance at those two innocent mecha who were still clueless about what was happening. In his heart, however, he firmly gave his daughter 32 thumbs ups <sup>3</sup>: *D\*mn, as expected of a daughter of mine, definitely never taking a loss if she can help it.*

"The black mecha is called [Forge the Future] <sup>4</sup>, while the advanced mecha is called [Self-Defined Destiny] <sup>5</sup>," Ling Xiao revealed their IDs to his daughter without any hesitation, using action to show his support for his daughter's decision.

Seeing the two mecha on the stage stop fighting to turn and look at them one after the other, Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun felt their hearts skip a beat. Was the other side about to kick them out now? In his mecha's cockpit, Zhao Jun even began to pray with his palms held together: *Oh God, please no!*

In the midst of Li Lanfeng's and Zhao Jun's worrying, the two mecha on the stage turned back in silent unison, and then the intermediate mecha suddenly leapt backwards, pulling away once more from the imperial mecha to put some distance between them. It looked like a new fight was about to begin.

"That scared me! I thought we were really about to get kicked out of here!" Only then did Zhao Jun lower his palms with the sense of relief of a survivor, exclaiming to Li Lanfeng with some lingering fear.

"For some reason, I still feel somewhat uneasy." Li Lanfeng did not know why, but a strong sense of danger was spreading within his heart.

# Chapter 299

## Advanced Mecha Warrior?

"What's wrong? Could it be that they truly intend to kick us out?" Zhao Jun, who had relaxed, was once again anxious as he asked with a look of concern.

"No, since they have yet to kick us out, I doubt they would do that after this. However, I have a hunch that we might have to pay a huge price if we continue observing..." Li Lanfeng's voice was extremely soft, seemingly talking to himself. He was unable to come up with a reason at the moment as to why he had that hunch.

"Even if we have to pay a price, are you willing to abandon this opportunity?" Zhao Jun did not believe Li Lanfeng was willing to take the initiative and leave.

"Of course not. Even if I have to pay a huge price, I will still stay and observe." Li Lanfeng replied decisively and smiled bitterly afterwards.

Being a number one elite family, the Li Family naturally had a few imperial operators serving them. However, no matter if it was his current identity or his other unpresentable identity, he did not have the right to obtain pointers from those people... He was thus unable to reject the temptation before him, especially because he wanted to become a winner who could dictate his own destiny and that was why he was all the more unable to reject this opportunity.

"Therefore, why should we think about the future? What we should do now, is to grasp the opportunity to observe and study what's before us." Zhao Jun smiled, being of the same mind.

"You're right!" Li Lanfeng laughed soundlessly and started to reflect on his mentality of overthinking things. It was just that this bad habit had been ingrained in him from a young age and was impossible to correct even if he wanted to. Thinking of this, Li Lanfeng sighed softly and appeared at a loss.

"Quick, take a look, the intermediate mecha is moving!" Zhao Jun's shout suddenly sounded beside his ears. Luckily they were using their private comms or else, with Zhao Jun making such a big disturbance, they would have definitely been chased out

by the room's owner.

Li Lanfeng hurriedly curbed his thoughts and focused on the arena. The intermediate mecha had indeed moved but it did not choose to attack immediately. Instead, it hopped around the imperial operator by the edge of the arena at high speed. Its speed increased to the point where the mecha's silhouette turned blurry.

"How is this possible? This shadow slidestep is a technique only an advanced mecha warrior would know." Looking at this scene, Zhao Jun cried out in disbelieving surprise.

Li Lanfeng's expression instantly stiffened. Could it be that the operator of this intermediate mecha was an advanced mecha warrior? There were numerous techniques that could only be executed with a compatible mecha, just like the shadow slidestep which was an exclusive technique of an advanced mecha. Did an intermediate mecha have the capability of allowing the operator to execute such a technique?

For some reason, the rabbit mecha of that time surfaced in Li Lanfeng's mind at this moment. It had clearly been a trainee mecha, yet the other party had executed many movements which exceeded the limit of a trainee mecha, pushing the mecha to its extreme limits. Wait, it was to the extent of even exceeding the limit... Could it be that this intermediate mecha operator was another outstanding aberrant operator?

"No, it's impossible... the rabbit mecha operator is unique and unmatched." Li Lanfeng shook his head and expelled the thoughts in his mind. He would never admit that someone could be mentioned on equal terms with the rabbit in his heart.

Just as both spectators were bewildered, the intermediate mecha finally launched another attack after circling several times around the arena.

The shadow slidestep was simultaneously an evasion and confusion technique that would cause illusions to appear before the opponent. An afterimage of the mecha would be displayed through the external recording device, and although this would only cause several seconds of delay, it could perhaps lead to an important turning point to obtain victory during a high-speed mecha fight.

Therefore, by the time Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng could see the attacking movement of the intermediate mecha clearly, it had already appeared behind the imperial mecha,

and the sharp, shiny, black tangdao in its right hand chopped down, making a sound of tearing through air. This showed that the attack was both powerful and fierce, but while facing this attack the imperial mecha did not move in the slightest.

Even though Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng knew that it was impossible for the attack to land, seeing the intermediate mecha's tangdao about to chop down on the imperial mecha's shoulder made them involuntarily cry out "ahh!" in alarm as the mecha was so close to danger.

With a resounding 'bang', the imperial operator merely leaned slightly to the side and, raising his right hand, stopped the tangdao that was about to strike the shoulder of his mecha. So it turned out that the beam shield on the imperial mecha had quietly activated while the tangdao had struck the beam shield, which generated a powerful rebound and directly sent the intermediate mecha bouncing backwards into the air.

Both of them were under the impression that the intermediate mecha would retreat after having made an ineffective attack, but it suddenly rallied itself and renewed its onslaught. After the intermediate mecha was sent away by the rebound, its originally silent engine abruptly exploded with noise and using its thrusters as opposing force, it directly neutralized the powerful rebound force.

The mecha's engine ceased once again after neutralizing the rebound force. Having maintained its position, the intermediate mecha suddenly began to rotate rapidly like a spinning top before following up by launching a fierce kick towards the imperial mecha below it.

"Whirlwind Garotte!" Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng once again cried out in surprise as this was another advanced-level technique exclusive to advanced mecha warriors.

Seemingly having anticipated this move, the imperial operator once again easily broke through the move. The operator was only seen to decisively raise both arms of his mecha, easily grasping firm hold of the intermediate mecha's powerful kick from among the flurry of afterimages of the spinning leg.

There was a loud 'bang' as the intermediate mecha was firmly smashed onto the ground and slid out several meters.

The instant it was smashed onto the ground, even Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng, who were standing at the edge spectating the fight, could feel an intense vibration from where

they stood. This terrifying impact caused their expressions to faintly change, believing that the advanced mecha warrior who had received the brunt of this force would not be feeling any better than what they imagined.

Both of them were under the impression that the intermediate mecha would halt all its movements. Even if its body was sturdy, usually one would choose to lie down on the ground to recover their conditions for a few seconds upon receiving such a powerful blow. Unexpectedly, while the mecha was sliding out several meters and had yet to stop, it moved once again as its right hand suddenly slammed the ground and using the rebound force, the entire mecha soared into the air.

At the same time, the mecha's engine turned on again and this time round, it took advantage of its speed to fiercely pounce towards the imperial mecha in a flash. The cold weapon in its hand carried the momentum of a violent storm as it chopped towards the imperial mecha. Seeing the intermediate mecha dashing around the imperial mecha, no one could guess at the intermediate mecha's direction of movement. This type of irregular movement style caused Zhao Jun's and Li Lanfeng's countenance to change once again.

Currently, they were certain that the operator controlling the intermediate mecha was absolutely not an intermediate mecha warrior as they had previously believed and was undoubtedly an advanced mecha warrior. Reason being, this type of irregular movement style required the execution of numerous hand movements at a frightening speed in an instant; it was definitely not something an intermediate mecha warrior could accomplish.

Li Lanfeng could not help but think to himself, that if he were to operate this intermediate mecha, could he accomplish those practically non-stop hand movements like the other party could? Considering the limitations of the intermediate mecha, Li Lanfeng realised that it would be very difficult. Perhaps he might be able to accomplish it, but it would not be possible to perform it so brilliantly and smoothly and at the same time with such ease like the other. Did this mean that the other party's control skills were better than his?

Thinking of this, Li Lanfeng felt faintly disappointed inside. Genius operators had appeared around him one after another — with his average control talent, would he truly be able to change his fate as he challenged heaven's will?

"Hey, talent is indeed important, but foundations and hard work are of more



importance than talent. If you were to train all levels of foundational controls to perfection, I believe that you will not be inferior compared to those geniuses..." The words left behind by that rabbit mecha surfaced once again in Li Lanfeng's heart and he was suddenly jolted to his senses. That's right, maybe he was lacking in talent, but he would continue working hard and practice every foundational control skill until they became part of his instinct. Although the difficulty increased with each level, he had never forgotten the warning words of advice the rabbit had given him, and this had always been his psychological pillar!

"Rest assured, I will not be defeated by those geniuses. I will be more hardworking than them and when we meet, I hope I will no longer be looking up at you." Li Lanfeng secretly clenched his fists as his confidence, which had received a setback due to the intermediate mecha, once again recovered.

He could lose to his rabbit friend, but he could not lose to others. Even if the intermediate mecha warrior before him had an aberrant talent in control, it could not cause his confidence to crumble.

He would never lose to the other party!

On the arena, the sounds of fighting had never stopped, and at times the rhythm of those sounds even seemed as if they were well planned and methodically arranged. Even though the battle was somewhat indistinct from Zhao Jun's and Li Lanfeng's perspective, they knew that the imperial operator had without a doubt intercepted all the advanced mecha warrior's irregular attacks.

Just like that, the intermediate mecha continued to launch fierce attacks for approximately one minute. Although it might not seem long, Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng understood that during this one minute, the hand speed of the intermediate mecha operator had been in a state of high speed. Even Zhao Jun, who was classified as a special-class operator, could not help but tremble internally, hands starting to throb in pain as he imagined himself being the one doing the operating.

These movements had high requirements of an operator's hand speed and for an ordinary intermediate mecha to execute those high-level techniques, it would require the operator's control skills to match. Therefore, Zhao Jun even suspected that the operator's hands were currently cramped and had become numb.

When the intermediate mecha landed, Zhao Jun and Li Lanfeng could not help but

breathe out, thinking that they should be able to relax and rest for a moment now. Unexpectedly, the intermediate mecha had just landed when it once again moved and executed a shadow sidestep, the exclusive technique of advanced mecha, while dashing towards the imperial mecha...

"What the f\*ck, does he never get tired?" Zhao Jun could not help but curse. Could it be that the operator of the intermediate mecha was a robot?

"What if the other party's true level is at mecha master level?" Li Lanfeng replied unperturbedly.

From the control skills displayed by the intermediate mecha, Li Lanfeng did not think that the other party's real skills were only that of an advanced mecha warrior. He even believed that, perhaps, the other party might have already reached the level of a special-class operator, or even possibly the level of an ace operator.

# Chapter 300

## Ling Lan's Mistake!

Although these conjectures caused discomfort in Li Lanfeng's heart and made him feel that the huge difference between them would be difficult to make up for, he would not disregard the other party's strength due to this.

"It couldn't be..." Zhao Jun replied in astonishment. When fighting against an imperial operator, even if it was just a guidance match, it was undoubtedly an insult towards that operator by using an intermediate mecha to take up the challenge.

"Perhaps there might be a deeper meaning to it." Li Lanfeng touched his chin and started pondering.

"What deeper meaning?" Zhao Jun asked in puzzlement.

"Could using a lesser mecha to execute advanced-level techniques help in comprehending those advanced-level techniques?" Li Lanfeng had indeed overthought things; he would always come up with some reasonings to convince himself, just like now. He decided to go redeem an intermediate mecha again after he finished spectating the fight, and experiment using advanced-level techniques on that mecha to see if it would be of help in improving his control over advanced techniques.

Based on Li Lanfeng's current strength and hand speed, he had already achieved the standard to advance to special-class operator level. The reason he had yet to advance was that he felt there were some fundamental movements that he was unable to execute exactly as he willed. He had always borne in mind the words that the rabbit mecha had consoled him with, so without perfecting those techniques, he was unable to convince himself to enter the next level.

He had originally assumed that this problem was due to insufficient practice, but from the current situation, he felt that perhaps it might be because of his lack of thorough understanding and that it was time to change and try another method.

At this moment, Ling Lan was unaware that her execution of techniques surpassing her level had caused Li Lanfeng, who was spectating the fight, to have a different train

of thought, hence opening up a different type of training method. This fortuitous misconception gave him new insight towards foundational control.



"Ling Lan, are you still not aware that there's a problem with your control?"

Just as Ling Lan executed a shadow slidestep to continue attacking Ling Xiao, her father's indifferent voice suddenly sounded out in the cockpit. Ling Xiao's voice had always contained indulgence and acknowledgement, yet his current tone actually contained a hint of coldness and reproach.

Hearing his words, Ling Lan was alarmed, but her attack was already a nocked arrow that had to be released. Ling Xiao's counterattack was efficient this time — he launched a palm strike which, with a snapping sound, struck the crook of the arm of the mecha that Ling Lan was operating. It directly destroyed the mecha arm's control system, which basically meant that the right hand of Ling Lan's mecha had been crippled.

With a 'clang', the cold weapon Regretless in Ling Lan's hand dropped to the ground. The right hand which had lost control obviously did not have any means of holding onto that heavy weapon, and so the weapon was naturally dropped.

Ling Lan immediately leaped backwards, increasing the distance between them, and quietly stood stationary while starting to decipher the meaning of Ling Xiao's questioning words.

"Ling Lan, after launching attacks for so long, haven't you noticed your problem?" Ling Xiao's voice once again rang out in the cockpit, asking the same question.

"Is there a problem?" Ling Lan pondered aloud. Indeed, she had not noticed any problems with her own control. Although executing advanced-level techniques which were distinctive to advanced mecha on an intermediate mecha was quite strenuous, she had undoubtedly increased the combat power of the mecha several times over. Otherwise, based on an intermediate mecha's capability, it would have been impossible to exchange blows with an imperial mecha for such an extended period of time and she would have long been knocked down.

"Are you thinking that you've increased the mecha's combat power?" Ling Xiao could

make out Ling Lan's thoughts at a glance and so bluntly asked her.

"Yes," Ling Lan replied honestly.

"But are things really what you believe them to be?" Ling Xiao's questioning stunned Ling Lan. Using higher level techniques would of course allow a mecha's power to be greater. Or was she mistaken?

"What's the current damage level of your mecha?" Ling Xiao sighed and could not help but rub at his brow.

As a father, he had lacked severely in fulfilling his obligations. If Ling Lan had not proposed to have him guide her in mecha piloting, he would not have known that his daughter's understanding of mecha piloting would have actually entered a diverged route. It seemed like there were too many things he had to learn to become a competent father. However, it was not serious as it was not considered too late for him to have realised this.

Ling Xiao took a glance at the silent intermediate mecha displayed on his screen and felt certain. As long as Ling Lan realised her mistake, her control skills were bound to improve. Thinking of this, Ling Xiao could not help but feel proud once again. Take a look, this is my, Ling Xiao's daughter. Even though she's a female, she has still managed to inherit my exceptional control talent, and she'll definitely be the best female mecha master.

Ling Xiao had high hopes for Ling Lan and believed that she would inevitably become an ace mecha master. Of course, under his wholehearted nurturing, it was not impossible for her to become the number one imperial operator in the Federation. Thinking of this possibility, Ling Xiao could not help but tremble. Despite being a god-class operator, he was still so moved at the thought of possibly witnessing his daughter ascending to the pinnacle that he could not be calm.

Alright, please forgive a father's feelings. Even if Ling Xiao was a god-class operator, at this moment, he was still an ordinary father who dearly loved his daughter.

Upon hearing Ling Xiao's words, Ling Lan did not delay in asking Little Four, who was currently in control of the mecha, about the mecha's condition.

Little Four replied that although he had tried his utmost to maintain the mecha's balance, its current damage level was already at 32.77% due to Ling Lan

overextending the mecha by repeatedly executing advanced-level techniques. That was to say, if Ling Lan were to continue fighting in this manner, the mecha would only be able to sustain itself for another three minutes before it would completely fall apart.

"Damage level is at 32.77%." Ling Lan had not expected that the mecha's damage level would be so high. She somewhat dejectedly relayed this answer to Ling Xiao.

Ling Xiao quirked his brows, somewhat surprised. He had assumed that, with Ling Lan frantically overextending the mecha, the damage level was sure to be more than 40%. Unexpectedly, it was only slightly over 30%. It seemed like his daughter normally took great care of her mecha and made sure that every function of the mecha was adjusted to near optimum levels, thus being able to keep the damage level this low.

Ling Xiao was very satisfied by this. Only a mecha operator who truly cherished their mecha would be able to understand the significance of a mecha to an operator, and thus be able to bring out the true potential of the mecha without restraint. Without him having to bring this to her attention, his own daughter had been able to naturally comprehend this aspect. This proved that his daughter was a natural-born, outstanding mecha operator.

Ling Xiao, who was filled with appreciation for his daughter at this moment, was not aware that his daughter was absolutely not as great as he imagined. The mecha's low damage rate was completely due to Ling Lan's cheat, the omnipotent Little Four, who had done his utmost in preserving and maintaining the mecha. However, Little Four was exclusively Ling Lan's and could be considered as part of Ling Lan's ability, so Ling Xiao could not be considered to have been joyous for nothing.

"According to this damage rate, you'll only be able to continue for another three minutes. Do you perhaps think you can defeat me during those three minutes?" Even though Ling Xiao was very satisfied with his daughter, his tone was still cold. At this moment, he was not playing the role of a gentle father but a strict teacher. Since a problem with Ling Lan's mecha piloting had surfaced, then Ling Xiao needed to let Ling Lan understand her problem and keep it in mind.

"No, I've never thought so. Even if father were to abandon your defences and stand there like a sandbag for me to attack as I wish for three minutes, I would still be unable to defeat you." Ling Lan was clear about the difference in strength between her and Ling Xiao. She had merely had the extravagant hope of landing an attack on him once... only now did Ling Lan realize that her wish was actually so insignificant. From the

start, she had been so oppressed by her father's powerful aura that she was somewhat breathless.

"I was only hoping to let father witness the techniques I have mastered. Of course, were it possible, I very much wished to land a strike on you." Ling Lan honestly revealed her own thoughts.

"Do you think you can achieve that?" Ling Xiao snorted and used the tip of his mecha's toe to point at his current position. Ling Lan subconsciously looked over, and what she saw caused Ling Lan to be transfixed. Her expression which had still been quite calm and collected suddenly froze.

"Have you understood?" Ling Xiao asked coldly.

"Yes, I was too egotistical," replied Ling Lan with a bitter smile; she saw that despite all her advanced attacks that she had racked her brains to think up, it had all been insignificant to her father Ling Xiao. Because from the start, the feet of Ling Xiao's mecha had never moved; he had stood there all along. Currently, he was still standing in the same spot and even his feet had not lifted once.

"It's not a problem wanting to win, but the problem lies in you. After executing those ineffective advanced-level techniques, why did you obstinately persist in using them? You clearly knew that if you were to repeatedly execute those techniques, not only would it be a huge burden on yourself, it would be the same for your mecha... Ultimately, there would have been no need for others to defeat you as you would have caused your own defeat. Is this something a qualified mecha operator should do?" Ling Xiao questioned with a grim expression.

Ling Xiao's questioning caused Ling Lan to lower her head in shame. He was right — other than having talent and capability, a cool head could not be lacked as this was related to the decision-making and methods of coping during a battle. A rash action could very well bring about an extreme crisis for a mecha operator and, at the same time, implicate their comrades. Earlier on, she had been too excited, agitated and rash. There had only been one thought in her mind at that moment and that was to successfully land a strike on her father as, after all, he was a god-class operator... In the world of mecha, a god-class operator was equivalent to a god-like existence.

"You've forgotten something more important. In my legacy, I should have repeatedly emphasized that the foundation is of greatest importance for any techniques." Seeing

that Ling Lan understood her own mistake, Ling Xiao sighed gently and his tone softened.

"Wasn't I using the foundational controls for advanced mecha?" Ling Lan asked in astonishment.

"Were they foundational controls? They should be a set of foundational controls built on other foundational controls, techniques specially developed for advanced mecha. If you were currently using an advanced mecha, I could have just barely agreed with your viewpoint. However, are you using an advanced mecha at this moment?" Ling Xiao once again answered her question with a question.

Ling Lan was left speechless by Ling Xiao's questioning and knew now that her viewpoint had been wrong. Perhaps for an advanced mecha, the techniques she had used were more or less the same as foundation controls and not particularly difficult. However, when using an intermediate mecha, they were undoubtedly challenging advanced-level techniques and indeed could not be related to foundational controls.





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